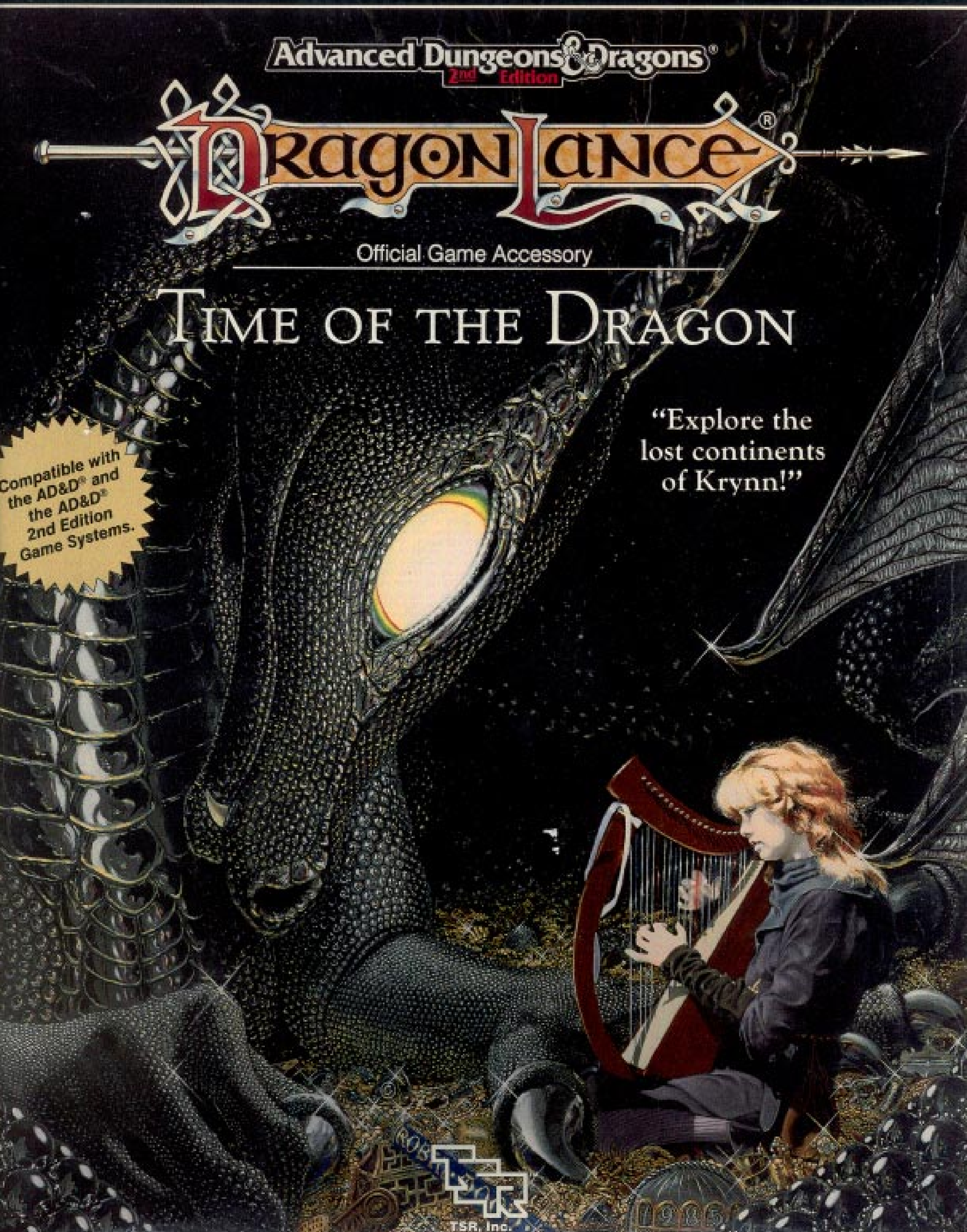
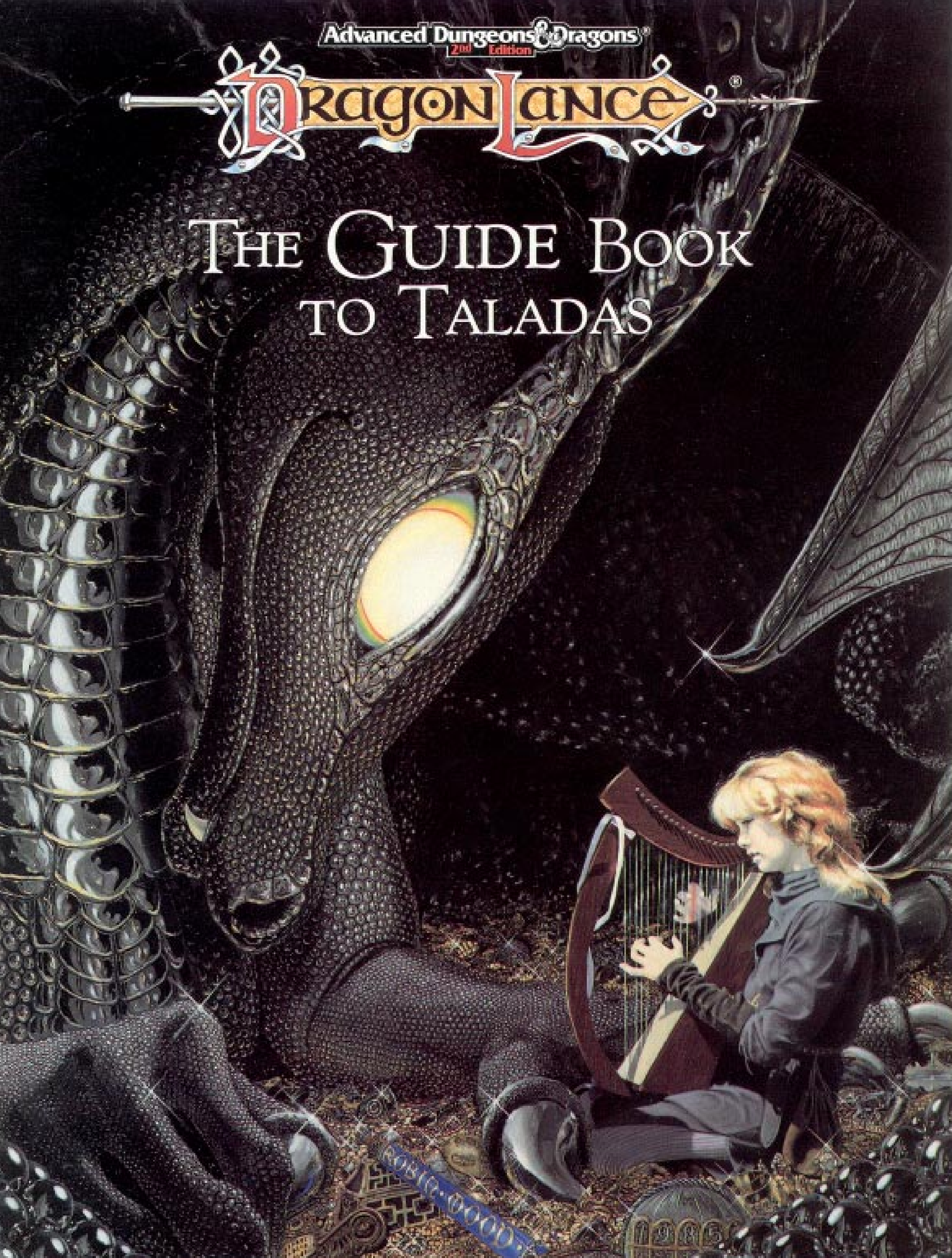

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®
2nd Edition
DragonLance®
Official Game Accessory
Time of the Dragon
"Explore the lost continents of Krynn!"
Compatible with the AD&D® and the AD&D® 2nd Edition Game Systems.
TSR, Inc.

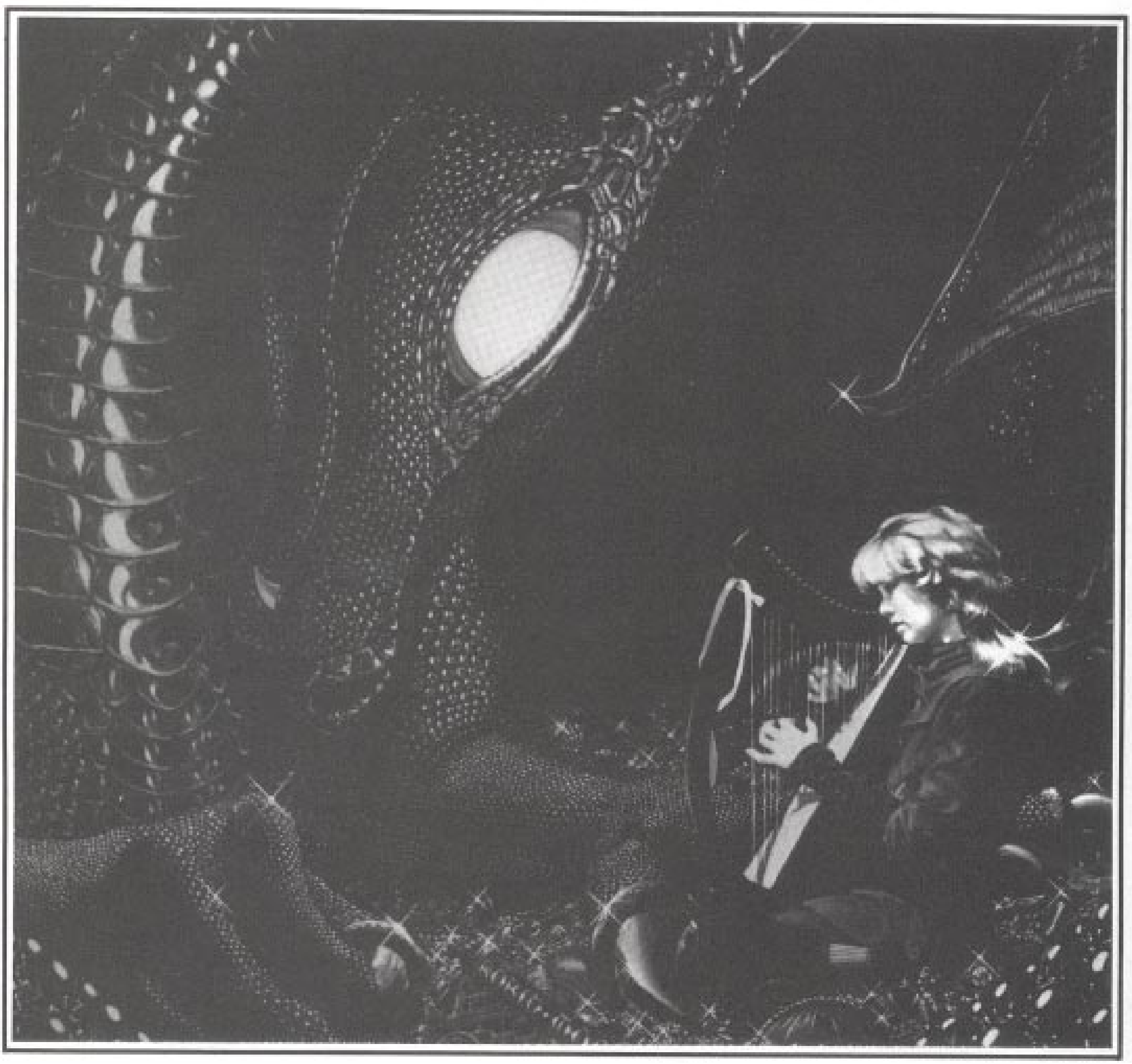

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®
2nd Edition
DragonLance®
The Guide Book
to Taladas

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons 2nd Edition

DRAGONLANCE®

Official Game Accessory

TIME OF THE DRAGON



Official Game Accessory

THE GUIDE BOOK TO TALADAS

BY DAVID "ZEB" COOK

CREDITS:

Design: David "Zeb" Cook
Editing: Michael Breault
Cover Art: Robin Wood, Fred Fields
Interior Art: Stephen Fabian
Cartography: Dave Sutherland, Dave LaForce
Typography: Gaye O'Keefe
Keylining: Stephanie Tabat

Distributed to the book trade in the United States by Random House, Inc., and in Canada by Random House of Canada, Ltd. Distributed to the toy and hobby trade by regional distributors. Distributed in the United Kingdom by TSR Ltd.

TSR, Inc.
POB 756
Lake Geneva
WI 53147

TSR, Inc.
PRODUCTS OF YOUR IMAGINATION™

TSR Ltd.
120 Church End, Cherry Hinton
Cambridge CB1 3LB
United Kingdom

ISBN 0-88038-773-4

1050XXX1501

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE GUIDE BOOK TO TALADAS

"... the Greygem was loosed to drift away to the western lands, what we know as Ansalon, where it wrought its magic upon all the races there. Little is said of the land of the Greygem's source in the histories of men. The gnomes of Nevermind may have histories that tell much more (if these have not been destroyed by the latest of their advancements).

"It therefore stands that the Lands of the Greygem lie to the east, beyond the shores of once-arrogant Istar, if such lands exist at all, for there has been no mention of them even for centuries before the Cataclysm. Mentioned only during the Age of Light, this is likely to be no more than a story told to children at night."

—Astinus of Palanthus

Once there was a planet called Krynn where man and elf, dwarf and gnome, minotaur and dragon dwelled. They lived in a land called Ansalon and knew no other. Krynn was a vast planet and there were more places than just Ansalon, but the men of Ansalon were too busy with their own affairs, too concerned with gods and dragons, to learn of the rest of their world.

Perhaps now, with the War of the Lance over, those of Ansalon will gain the desire to explore and expand. But what will they find? What else is there on the planet of Krynn?

Time of the Dragon provides part of that answer. Within the pages of these books is a detailed description of an entirely new land—Taladas—and its inhabitants. For those used to the people and attitudes of Ansalon, Taladas is a land of surprises. Separated by a broad extent of ocean, it is very different from Ansalon. What do these people know of the Kinslayer War, the arrogance of the Priest-Kings of Istar and their humbling at the hands of the gods? Have their lands been ravaged by dragons or their children slain by draconians?

Taladas is a very different world from Ansalon. There was a time when it shared a common thread, a little bit of history that was the same. But then the Age of Dreams ended and the bonds between Ansalon and Taladas slowly loosened. Although even today they share some common features, each has taken a different path through history.

This set presents all the basic information about the continent of Taladas and the lands and peoples therein. The *Guide Book of Taladas* describes the past history of Taladas, its geography, climate, peoples, and cultures. While the DM must certainly be aware of all the information in the Guide Book, it is his decision to reveal anything contained in it to his players. Certainly he will find many things he feels they should know, however the decision is left for him to make. The *Book of Adventure* presents information for the DM alone. Included in this are major and minor NPCs, new monsters, detailed rules for player character "mad" gnomes, goblins, ogres, and minotaurs, encounter tables, BATTLESYSTEM™ rules information, and new background on the gods of Krynn.

Also in this set are 24 map cards. These cards present detailed maps of sites of interest, gnome inventions, and examples dress and clothing of the people of Taladas. Brief key descriptions are found on the backs of the cards. For convenience, the keys are arranged on the backs of different cards, so that both the map and key are available during play. Finally, there are four large, four-color maps. Two of these join together to form a map of Taladas. The other two are a detailed map of a region of Taladas and a map of Kristophan, capital of the Minotaur League.

ANSALON AND TALADAS

Up to now, everything that has ever been presented about the world of Krynn has been from the Ansalonian point of view. The world, its gods, its history, and events have all been told as they relate to Ansalon, the continent where the War of the Lance was fought. To the tellers, Ansalon is the center of the world and the events there are of paramount importance to all of Krynn. To these storytellers, it is perfectly reasonable that the kender of Kendermore, the gnomes of Mount Nevermind, and the elves of Qualinesti and Silvanesti are the only kinds of kender, gnomes, and elves that are to be found.

Quite simply, these historians and bards are wrong. While the history of Ansalon is important, it is not the only history of Krynn. Kender, gnomes, and elves take other forms than those found on Ansalon. For these other people the departure of the gods and the Cataclysm did not occur because of the vanity and arrogance of the King-Priest. As the DM, you will discover that things in Taladas are often not what you have come to expect from the world of Krynn. True, there are kender and gnomes and minotaurs, even draconians, but they may be very different from those of Ansalon. This is part of the fun of discovering and exploring Taladas. Now you have new surprises and unexpected twists to spring upon your players.

At the same time, not everything is totally new; there are features the two continents share in common. The gods of Ansalon are also the gods of Taladas. Their names are different, as are the legends that surround them, but they have the power to overcome mere obstacles of space and time. Their wars and struggles make up part of the common background and history of the world.

It is important to remember these differences when dealing with Taladas. The rules and attitudes that you and your players may be familiar with do not necessarily apply here. As the DM, you must constantly be aware of this so you can reeducate your players in an exciting and entertaining fashion.

THE HISTORY OF TALADAS

The people of Taladas, all the cultures and tribes, have never had the benefit of the services of the great historian Astinus

of Palanthus. There is no grand record of history such as the *Iconochronos.* Indeed, such a history is nearly impossible, since most of the people of Taladas have no written language and rely instead on oral traditions. The primary written histories are found among the gnomes of Hitehkel, the Lost Silvanesti, and the cities of the League. Most written histories follow the dating conventions of Ansalon (Pri-Cataclius and Alt-Cataclius) brought over by the minotaurs of the League and the Lost Silvanesti. The gnomes of Hitehkel divide history into three periods: The Birthing Age, from that moment Reorx created them to the releasing of the Greygem; The Cursed Age, from the releasing of the Greygem to the Cataclysm; and Reorx's Gift, the current age.

For convenience, the timeline below uses Astinus's division of history into five different ages: the Age of Dreams, the Age of Light, the Age of Might, the Age of Darkness, and the Age of Dragons. Some of these ages have significance for the people of Taladas; others are without meaning and are provided only as reference points. Furthermore, the timeline also provides dates for selected events in Ansalon. These are given when interpretation of identical events varies widely between the two lands or to serve as reference points for comparing the two histories.

THE AGE OF DREAMS

This period of the history of Krynn is the most mystical and least documented of all. At the same time, this period has the highest correlation between the histories of Taladas and Ansalon, for this is the age of the gods.

The Gods Awaken: The gods emerge from the Beyond into the chaos of the Universe. The Highfather remains behind, but charges his children with the creation of all. To this end, the gods proclaim the Balance and slow the Chaos to make Order. In doing so, they divide into Good, Evil, and Neutrality.

The Stars are Born: According to the gnomes, Reorx decided to begin the forging of men. In the initial stages of shaping, the sparks from the anvil and hammer formed the stars, while the impurities formed the world. The other gods set to fashioning the spirits of gnomes and men. (Ansalon tradition says that Reorx was forging the world, not men.)

The All-Saints War: Reorx finishes the mortal forms. Before they can be set upon the world, the gods fall to fighting. Those of good announce that the spirits must have dominion over the world. Reorx balks at this, holding that he did not create this world for dominion. The evil gods seize the opportunity and plunge the infant universe into the All-Saints War, hoping in the end to corrupt the new forms to their service.

End of the All-Saints War: Blindel, the Dolphin-Lord (Habbakuk) persuades Graylord (Gilean) to go to Reorx's tent and chant part of the secret knowledge that only he knows, showing the path of Darkness. Reorx relents in his refusal to aid the gods of good and unites with them. Together, they force the gods of evil to retreat. Fearing imminent destruction of the Balance, the Highfather from Beyond decrees the Balance of the World. The gifts are bestowed upon the races and Reorx allows them to enter into the forms he has created.

Krynn is Populated: The spirits enter the world according to their forms. There is no agreement among the races as to who was first. The minotaurs claim the ogres preceded all, while the elves set themselves first. Men claim all populated the world at once. Both the gnomes and dwarves of Taladas claim to be the fast children of Reorx.

THE AGE OF LIGHT

circa 4000 PC *The Birth of the Minoi:* Reorx foolishly attempts to teach the humans the arts of the forge and the machine, after having taught these to the gnomoi. They do not meet his expectations and so he curses them, transforming them into the minoi. (In Ansalon, the minoi are the only gnomes known.)

circa 3500 *The Making of Grathanich:* Reorx forges the Grathanich atop Mount Garath, drawing upon the magical might of Lunias (Lunitari). Within this gem, Udras (Sirrion) the Alchemist blends massive magical power. The gem is presented to the First King, the gnomoi Aldinanachru, as a sign of favor from Reorx to his kind. In Ansalon this gem is known as the Greystone (or Greygem) of Garath. Aldinanachru orders the Grathanich placed in the tower of Lunias atop Mount Garath.

circa 3100 *Grathanich Released:* Hiteh (Hiddukel) tricks Milgas Kadwar of the minoi into releasing the Grathanich. It drifts off to the west, wreaking havoc through its magical energies. In punishment for their foolishness, Reorx banishes the Kadwar, largest of the minoi clans, to pursue the Grathanich across Krynn. (When the Kadwar arrive in Ansalon, they abandon the minoi name to become the gnomes of Mount Nevermind.)

2140 *Kinslayer War (Ansalon)*

2050 to 2030 *The Great March (Ansalon)*

1241 *Fall of Ergoth (Ansalon)*

THE AGE OF DARKNESS

0 *The Cataclysm Strikes:* While Ansalon is pounded by a series of disastrous meteor strikes, Taladas is rent by a single massive blow. The central plain is torn asunder and Hiteh's Night begins.

1 to 20 *Hiteh's Night:* Following the Cataclysm, the sky is darkened by ash and smoke and fire. Moutains rise overnight from level ground. Torrential rains create seas where deserts once were. The black sky is lit from the glow of volcanoes. Disease appears. The priests of Taladas suddenly discover they have lost their spells and are unable to cure or heal. Disease and death sweep the land on an unprecedented scale. Plagues of cholera, black death, and influenza all exact a devastating toll upon a population that has never developed a strong immunity to disease.

21 *Mislaxa's Return:* Priests of Mislaxa (Mishakal) regain their powers on Tala-



das. Mislaxa, unable to bear the torment of the innocent of Taladas who suffer for the sins of Ansalon, secretly returns her power to those of her priests who have remained faithful through Hiteh's Night. Because her actions are in defiance of the other gods, Mislaxa is forced to charge her followers with the greatest secrecy. Her priests go underground, hiding their existence from all authorities. The Mystery Cult of Mislaxa is begun.

210 *Takhisis Returns:* Entering through the Foundation Stone in Ansalon, Takhisis (commonly known as the god Erestem) journeys to Taladas to free the evil dragons. She finds an opening to their place of exile at the heart of the Burning Sea. Released, the evil dragons begin to explore the changed world of Krynn, slowly appearing throughout Taladas. Contact with the dragons is infrequent however, as Takhisis does not care to have their presence known just yet.

232 Hiteh Appears in Taladas: Following the lead of Erestem (Takhisis), Hiteh (Hiddukel) appears and extends his influence into the lava-filled center of Taladas. There he works to release more dragons and recruit the strange creatures that live in this fiery world.

243 to 252 *The Gnomoi War:* The minions of Hiteh attempt to seize the Citadel of Aldinanachru, the forward-most outpost of the Gnomoi Lands, as a first test of the infant Dragonarmies. This opens the Gnomoi War between the dragons and fire-beings of Hitehkel and the gnomoi. For the most part the war is a series of small skirmishes marked by intense sieges. The Maker Ergormacdroniskar designs the first of the firefleet, gnomish ships capable of sailing across the seas of open lava. The knowledge is spread from citadel to citadel as the gnomes commence a major construction program intended to end the war.

255 *Storming the Tower of Flame:* Their fleet assembled, the gnomoi recruit human mercenaries and sail them to the Tower of Flame at the center of the Burning Sea. Although they fail to capture the Tower, which is the heart of the fire minions' lands, the attempt succeeds in terrifying the enemy. At the same time, Erestem forces Hiteh to withdraw the dragons from the fight, fearing he will squander valuable resources. No formal peace is declared, but the fire minions curtail any major expeditions against the gnomes, although they continue to conduct raids. The fire minions become hostile to humans, remembering their part in the attack.

296 *The Oath:* The evil dragons brought back into the world by Erestem call a Council of the Animal Lords, summoning the dragons to the Isle of Dragons. There they exact the Oath of Neutrality from the good dragons.

315 to 317 *The Usurpation:* Erestem, having already noticed Hiteh's activity, decides to annex it into her plans to dominate Krynn. Hiteh the Merchant works out a deal with Erestem whereby Erestem speaks through him. In the end however, Erestem usurps his position, assembling her own horde of the fire minions. Hiteh,

enraged at being outsmarted, retreats to the Void.

THE AGE OF DRAGONS

330 *Dragons Disappear from Taladas:* In preparation for the attack on Ansalon, evil dragons are sighted leaving Taladas in mass flights. However, some of their kind refuse to obey Erestem, preferring their lives here. These creatures become known as the *othlorx* (the Uninvolved), the first dragons of neutrality. Erestem curses the othlorx.

345 *Good Dragons Arrive:* The first of the good dragons are sighted over Taladas. Although prevented by the Oath from becoming involved in the War of the Lance on Ansalon, nothing prevents the good dragons from searching for their eggs. The search carries them throughout the lands of Taladas.

352 *Good Dragons Depart:* News of the secret of the draconians is carried to the good dragons searching Taladas. Freed from their Oath, most fly off to the west to avenge their children. However, some refuse the call, preferring to remain in Taladas. These dragons become neutral and are shunned by the good dragons, who view them with contempt and hatred. Outcast by both forces, the refusers find themselves identified with the othlorx, although the good dragons refer to them as the Oath-bound.

THE GEOGRAPHY OF TALADAS

The landscape of Taladas is highly unusual, a result of the force of the Cataclysm. Prior to it, Taladas, Ansalon, and all of Krynn were ordinary places, at least geologically. The land masses were stable and relatively unexceptional. All of that was drastically changed overnight. To understand how Taladas has become what it is, one must know what Taladas once was and what happened to it in the Cataclysm that wracked all of Krynn.

PRE-CATACLYSM TALADAS

Stretching from the cold north to the warmer climes of the equator, Taladas was once a single continent surrounded by concentric rings of outlying islands. Although a single landmass, the continent was formed by a series of plates. Several ranges of mountains rose, beginning in the west central region and arcing to the northeast and southeast. Farther northwest, beyond the ranges, lay the Ice Deserts, a cold and bitter land separated from the mountains by a band of pine forest and steppe known as the Tamire. From the shore of the Ice Deserts, travelers could see large packs of ice drifting southward.

The eastern coast of Taladas was raggedly split by an arm of the Urdile Ocean, creating a large sea, variously known as the Taladan or Indanalis Sea. To the south of the Indanalis, a low mountain range ran the length of the coast of the peninsula. On the other side of the range were the jungles of Neron.

The winds sweeping off the Southern Ocean normally stalled along the slopes of the Neron Mountains, depositing their rains on the southern slopes. Although the storms occasionally swept over the rounded peaks, most of the northern slope was hot, rugged, and dry, though it was far from a desert. At the far end of the peninsula the mountains tapered out and the land became a swampy delta.

North of the Indanalis Sea were the rich forests of Aurim. The land here was mostly rolling hills mixed with open plains. Watered by the warm breezes off the Indanalis Sea, the forests, primarily of hardwoods with some pines, were filled with game. The plains were noted for their good farmland. Indeed even the Urdile Ocean off the coast of Aurim was famous for its fine fishing banks. It was here, among all the riches of the earth, that the first strong kingdoms of Taladas formed, assembling the nomad tribes into settled and strong governments.

But all this changed with Hiteh's Night.

POST-CATACLYSM TALADAS

No one knows for certain the precise details of the Cataclysm night, for these are hidden in the secret thoughts of the gods. Whether Krynn swept through an asteroid field (as the more scientific-minded gnomes believe), sparks from Reorx's forge struck the earth (a dwarven belief), or the Evil God Erestem (Takhisis) fashioned a great stone and hurled it at Krynn (as the horsemen of the Tamire maintain) is not important. During that night, Ansalon was struck by a series of large meteorites (or mountains), causing the widespread destruction that created the Ansalon of today.

The Cataclysm came to Taladas with one significant change: Instead of a series of small strikes, the continent was struck by a single, massive blow. Why this did not shatter Krynn completely can only be surmised. Quite possibly this did not occur since the gods sought only to punish and not utterly destroy.

And punish they did. The blow struck the center of the continental group that forms Taladas, in a region of open plain just east of the great mountain chains. The impact was tremendous. The continent tore apart along the tectonic plates. New faults appeared, spreading both radially and concentrically out from the point of impact. The mountain ranges to the west, already geologically unstable, roused once more into volcanic fury. Earthquakes and eruptions shook the land.

One major fault split through the ranges and reached the western ocean. Water from that ocean flooded into the breach reaching all the way to the Indanalis Sea. At the same time, new activity drove up unseen lands across the mouth of that sea, cutting it off from the Urdile Ocean. The western end of the Neron peninsula was likewise shattered, the oceans there also flooding into the newly-shaped Indanalis Sea. Taladas all but disappeared in an explosive burst of volcano-heated steam.

With the impact, the rich land of northeast was shattered by newly-formed fissures. The rolling hills split and rose

into mountains, while the tectonic plates of the plains tilted and sank, combining with the easterly remains of the Indanalis Sea, while sulphur-filled rain clouds swept eastward on the prevailing winds, all to create the Storm Sea. Farther beyond it, the grey rains soaked the remaining northern woodlands, creating the Black Forests. The incipient kingdoms of Aurim were shattered and destroyed.

The Taladas that has emerged from the darkness of Hiteh's Night is very different from the single land that it once was. The continent has divided along several different fault lines, forming several distinct regions.

The western part of Taladas, though escaping the massive destruction of the east, was split by a fault running east to west, dividing the land into two sections. These are known as Northern and Southern Hosk. The southeastern section of Taladas, although much changed, is still known as Neron. The northeast, once called Aurim, is now the land of the Storm Sea and, farther out, the Rainward Isles. Parts of the western shore of the Storm Sea, where habitable, are remembered by the old name of Aurim, while the central eastern area is called the Black Forests. At the very center of the continent is a new land, Hitehkel, the open wound of Krynn.

Northern Hosk is the largest land area of the new Taladas. It encompasses most of the lands north and northwest of Hitehkel. Northern Hosk is divided into three main regions—the Tamire, the Panak Desert, and the Ring Mountains.

Filling the coastal plain, the Tamire is a broad expanse of open steppe, dotted with occasional woodlands and a few low mountain ridges. The land is dry, as the westerly winds sweep most of the rain-laden clouds quickly over the Tamire. The low mountain ranges force some rains to fall, making them islands of green forests in the midst of the open ground. Most of the Tamire is covered in tall, dry grasses. The roots of these form a near-impenetrable mat, making the land suitable for little but grazing.

Along its northern edge, the Tamire gradually gives way to the Panak Desert. This is a stony, rock-pan desert broken by weirdly eroded badlands and dry washes. Arctic winds give most of the desert a layer of permafrost. During the winters, stinging blasts of snow and ice rip across the open ground. Only a few mosses and low-growing plants survive in this region of bitter cold and little water. Feeding on these are small herds of *nasif* a type of caribou tended by the nomads of the desert.

Along the inner edge of Northern Hosk are the Ring Mountains. Part ancient range, part detritus of the Cataclysm, the Ring Mountains run the length of Northern Hosk. In the south, the outer slopes receive the bulk of the rains off the Western Ocean, making the mountain valleys lush and temperate year round. Farther north, the land becomes drier and colder. That part of the range edging the Panak Desert is often snowbound for months. Only the warming currents from Hitehkel prevent these peaks from permanent glaciation.

On the inner side of the mountains, the vales and snows give way to the Shining Lands. This is a region of glassified lava flows, polished by the deadly razor storms that sweep down out of the mountains into the boiling cauldron of Hitehkel.

Separating Northern and Southern Hosk is the Tiderun, the fault opened to the Western Sea. Although most of the subsidence was fairly slight (except where the mountains were split), it was sufficient to drop the channel below sea-level in most places. The flow of the run is governed by the tides of the Western Ocean. During the highest tides, the water rushes freely into the new Indanalis Sea. During periods of low tide, the run recedes, its banks shrinking. At the mountain gap, the Tiderun withdraws completely, leaving a muddy flat that can be crossed.

Below the Tiderun lies Southern Hosk, the second-largest land area of Taladas and the most populated. Along the outer arc of the land are important fishing banks of Hoor, just outside the Bay of Armach. Armach itself is nestled at the southern end of the New Mountains, a series of concentric ranges raised during Hiteh's Night. These mountains are dotted with volcanoes, hot springs, and other signs of geothermal activity. North of the New Mountains are the rich farmlands that support the cities of the League, while to the south are the forests of Thenol. Temperate along their upper reaches, Thenol's forests gradually become subtropical near Thunderbreach Strait.

The inner arc of Southern Hosk has risen into a massive block of jagged mountains. Towering over the Indanalis Sea, these mountains, known as the Steamwall, force back the rising steam and gasses from the Indanalis (or Sea of Poison) and Hitehkel, protecting the land to the west from these noxious clouds.

Westerly winds, sweeping over the peaks and through the Tiderun Gap, push the rain-laden clouds east over Neron and Aurim, there to drop their poisonous rains. The Steamwall Mountains are dead and barren, their ground sharp and coated in pasty acidic ash. Only a few incredibly hardy plants manage to grow here.

The Steamwall ends at Thunderbreach Strait, the southern opening to the Indanalis Sea. Here, ground faults opened precipitously, like a massive dam breaking during the early years of Hiteh's Night. The homes and lands that were not destroyed by the initial impact and the subsequent eruptions were mercilessly swept away by the pouring flood of the Windless Ocean. The narrowest point of the strait is still the site of underwater volcanic activity.

In the waters of the strait outside the Thunderbreach are a series of islands known as the Fisheries. The largest of these islands is Syldar. The warm waters of the southern ocean combine with the shallow shelf of the strait to create an area rich in plankton. Corals abound, slowly building reefs and atolls around which strange currents rush. Huge schools of tropical fish make the strait a fisherman's paradise, provided he can navigate the treacherous waters.

Some of the winds that blow east out of the Indanalis Sea turn to the southeast and mingle with the tropical storms that come off the Windless Sea. These southern rains thin and dissipate the poisons carried from Hitehkel, lessening their deadly effect on Neron. The abundant rains, hot temperatures, and even per-

haps the exotic nutrients from the ash have made the ancient jungles of Neron even darker and thicker. Strange creatures and wild tribes live in the hidden recesses of the forests, where they are rumored to be locked in perpetual wars with each other.

As the Neron peninsula extends out, the low range of mountains that rises in the center gradually tapers away, becoming first thickly forested hills and finally disappearing into a lowland area of swamp known as the Reed Delta. Fed by the heavy rains and sunken somewhat in the Cataclysm, the Reed Delta is a mixture of freshwater cane grass and saltwater mangrove swamp. The delta has gradually expanded over the years, slowly depositing the ash-laden silt washed down from the mountains.

Beyond the Reed Delta is the island of Baltch. Split asunder from the peninsula during the Cataclysm, the people of Baltch have isolated themselves from outside contact. Their island is low, barely above sea level. Dikes and levees protect the islanders from the fierce storms that threaten to wash their land away.

The northern edge of Neron is separated from Aurim by a low range of mountains. Once they formed the backbone of the peninsula, but since the Cataclysm they have pulled away to the north, creating Udras Bay. The mountains keep most of the poisonous winds of Hitehkel north of Neron with only a portion blowing through the Thunderbreach Strait.

North of the mountains is the land of Aurim. Once this was a rich and fertile plain. Now it is a dead wasteland. Shattered by the Cataclysm, Aurim lies directly in the path of the killing gasses and choking ash spewed out from Hitehkel. The land is gray and dust-covered. Trees are withered and petrified by the strange fumes that rise from the center of the earth. Only the hardiest, most perverse, and foulest creatures live among the dead ruins of Aurim.

Lapping at the shores of Aurim is what's left of the old Indanalis Sea. Noted for its freakish weather and stinging, chemical-laden water, this is now known as the Storm Sea. Little traffic plies its waves, for its abrupt shifts in weather (another gift from Hitehkel) are thought too dangerous to risk, especially since the water has poisoned all but the most fearsome of sea creatures.

Thrusting out from Aurim is a newly-formed peninsula that appeared when the lands beneath the Storm Sea sank. Here the land is far enough from Hitehkel to support plants and life, yet close enough to be twisted and warped by the strange gasses that blow ashore. This has created the Black Forests, expanses of warped woods draped with gray-green mosses. The woods are filled with dark creatures, long cut off from all others by the wasteland of Aurim. Occasionally inhabitants roam down the coast into Neron and similar creatures can be found in the darkest parts of both areas.

To the northeast of the main continent are the last remnants of Aurim, now called the Rainward Isles. Consisting of one main island and a number of seaward banks, the Rainward Isles earn their name from the near-perpetual rains and grey skies of that land. Here the warm, moisture-laden winds from Hitehkel meet cooler sea breezes, resulting in frequent showers over the land. Although most of the pollutants have dropped away by the time the winds reach the isles, black, tarry rains do fall from time to time. Though warm at the outset, the rains quickly become clammy and bone-chilling, making the Rainward Isles a gray, damp, and cold place.

Finally, at the center of all is Hitehkel. Once this had been the land of Aurim and the Indanalis Sea, but the great strike of the Cataclysm changed all that. It is now a like a great festering sore in the center of Taladas.

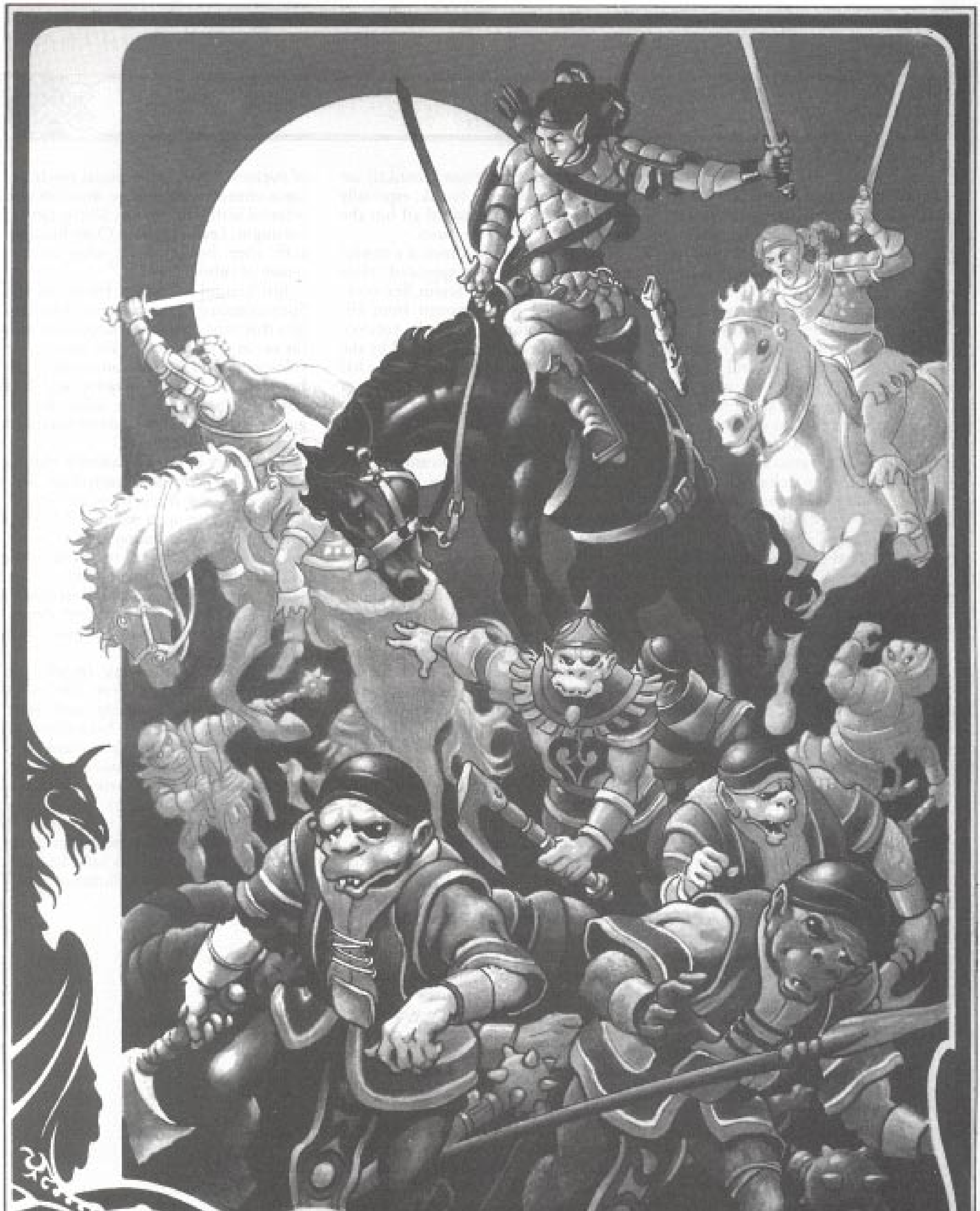
Between the Steamwall Mountains and Hitehkel proper lies the new Indanalis Sea or, as it is also known, the Sea of Poison. Trapped between two massive mountain ranges and kept seething and boiling by ever-fresh flows of lava, the Sea of Poison is rich in deadly salts and brines. Only the oddest and most deadly creatures can survive in its foul waters.

The waters here quickly crumble wood and etch metal, which makes sailing this sea an adventure few care to risk. The sun is blotted out by the constant clouds of sulphurous steam and the dreary drizzles of sweltering rain. All exposed goods become crusted with strange minerals and infested with mildewy rot. Metals tarnish overnight. Leather molds. Cloth becomes stiff, then brittle. Food takes on the stench of sulphur.

Just beyond the Sea of Poison are the Spires, cloaked in steam from the boiling lava that runs down their slopes and into the ocean. The Spires are the most active volcanoes of all Taladas, an entire range belching ash, fumes, magma, and lava flows. Yet even here there is life, for the gnomes have found themselves havens of safety amid all the chaos.

At the very heart of Hitehkel is Hiteh's Realm. This is the land storytellers identify as Hell, the Abyss brought into the world. It is the open wound of Krynn. The outer ring is a cooling crust of lava—thick here, thin there, shifting and cracking, treacherous to cross. It is like a moor, solid in some spots, quicksand in others, where a misstep leads to a fiery doom. The air reeks with poisonous gasses and sweltering heat.

Worse still is the very center—the Great Burning Sea. Here the earth bleeds, constantly churning forth fresh magma before the surface has a chance to cool. It is an ocean of melted rock, uncrossable by all but the most extraordinary means. The atmosphere here is pure poison and the temperature is high enough to scorch a man in a matter of minutes. Few, save the gnomes, have ever ventured here, for it can only be compared to standing in the heart of a volcano.



NORTHERN HOSK

Northern Hosk

"The sunlight guides our paths
To the tents of our mothers.
The grass guides our paths
To the tents of our fathers.
The water guides our path
To the tents of our sisters.
The deer guides our path
To the tents of our brothers.
Our liver guides our path
To the tents of our cousins."
—Traditional Uigan greeting

Northern Hosk is the largest of all the lands of Taladas and has the second-largest population. It is a land of geological wonders set in harsh surroundings. Fabled and little known to the lands of the south, it has been the homeland of innumerable nomadic tribes that are constantly melding, splitting, conquering, and raiding one another. These people have learned to eke out an existence in the harshest conditions from the dusty steppes of the south to the icy wastes of the far north.

Northern Hosk consists of three principal areas. The largest and most settled is the Tamire, an expanse of steppe reaching from the Tiderun to the midpoint of the continent. This land is known for its fierce riders, both human and elven. Along its southern coast, near the mouth of the Tiderun, are several trading cities, nominal members of the Southern League.

The other major region is the Panak Desert. Only a few tribes live in this frozen waste, tending herds of nasif and fishing in the icy waters of the Guurlamskas, the Northern Sea.

Isolating Tamire from the rest of Taladas are the Tiderun and the Ring Mountains. The former is only a minor obstacle, except for those foolish enough not to mind the ebb and flow of the tides. The latter is much more formidable and harbors both riches and dangers. Within its folds and ridges are goblin tribes and the fabled Howling Demons. Deep within the range are the Shining Lands, expanses of smooth glassified basalt scoured and polished by deadly winds of razor-sharp sands.

THE TAMIRE

The Tamire (which means "Fair Land" in the tongue of the Uigan) is a gently rolling plain dotted with low-rising mountain ranges and scattered areas of dense woodland thickets. The majority of the land, however, is covered by tall-grass prairie and thorny scrub.

Although it covers a broad area of Northern Hosk, weather conditions are fairly uniform throughout the Tamire. The seasonal variations are extreme. The average summer temperature is in the mid 80s to low 90s while the winter average is 5 to 10° Fahrenheit. Extremes of 100° + to -30° can occur. The farther north one travels through the Tamire, the lower the average temperatures become. Furthermore, in the northern regions the temperature drops at night and rises during the day quite quickly, making for scorching, dry days followed by freezing nights. Rains are infrequent—the average rainfall is a little over a foot a year. During the winter the ground is normally covered with a thin crust of snow and ferocious blizzards sometimes roar over the open land.

The Tamire rests atop a solid granite shield that was pushed up somewhat during the Cataclysm. Thus the shoreline along most of its length is cliff-like and jagged, with few good harbors or landing points. The shore does taper off to the south, giving way to broad, open beaches at the mouth of the Tiderun.

The shield has been thrust up through the surrounding plain to create two low mountain ranges down the center of the Tamire. The northern end of these ranges marks the edge of the Tamire proper. Though low and rounded, both ranges are dotted with numerous outcroppings of granite, fissured and split with age. Their height above the rest of the plateau forces more rain to fall on their slopes and also serves to break the fury of the winter storms blown in from the ocean.

The northern and southern ranges are called, in the Uigan tongue, Uesi Ilquar (Big Ilquar) and Burya Ilquar (Little Ilquar) respectively. Running between them is a broad gap known as the Tamogiur (Land for Passing Through). This gap has played a role as a major boundary and parley site between different tribes of the Tamire throughout history.

Because they receive more water than the surrounding plains, the Ilquar Mountains are thickly covered in forests of mixed pine and hardwoods, although the hearts of the ranges rise above the tree line. These forests provide the people of the Tamire with most of their wood for carving and cart- building. Musk deer, foxes, boars, martens, bears, and sables lair in the wooded slopes along with packs of hunting spiders and goblin tribes. The forests are filled with woodland birds and small mammals—mice, shrews, squirrels, rabbits, and chipmunks, making the forest rich for hunting. The trees also provide a winter haven for many of the animals of the steppe, particularly antelope, horses, and the rare steppe tiger, all seeking the shelter of the wooded lower slopes.

On the steppes dwell herds of antelope, wild horses, and camels (to the north), all of which live off the tough-stemmed grasses and winter, mosses of the plain. These animals are preyed upon by ankhegs, bulettes, wild dogs, and wolves that follow the herds as they migrate across the steppes. Less frequently met are the scarce steppe tigers. Once these roamed widely over the Tamire. Now they are only found in the region of the Ilquar Mountains. Around these mountains, too, are the prized falcons, sought after by chieftains and kings. These birds prey on the rabbits, mice, ground squirrels, and game hens that dwell in the grassland.

True is the old Uigan saying that states, "Only the witless bowman starves," referring to the riches of their land. The Uigan have indeed fared well in a land many others would find too harsh, but they are not the only tribe that lives in the Tamire. Many nomadic and semi-nomadic bands of humans and elves have long been a part of life in the Tamire.

Among the human tribes, the Uigan is currently the largest and most powerful force on the steppes. Other human tribes include the Kazar, Pureshk, Purgi, and Alan-atu. There are also many smaller clans that are not yet accorded the status of true tribes. Although these tribes bear many superficial similarities, each proudly considers itself quite different from the others. It is a grievous insult to knowingly misname a man's tribe.

Fewer in number but perhaps more tightly organized and ferocious are the Elf Clans, the *hosk'i imou merkitsa* or "people of the land before [the Cataclysm] ." Claiming a birthright to Hosk far older than that of the humans, the elves have maintained their barbaric lifestyle for centuries. Although normally preferring to attack their ancestral enemies the goblins, the elves are not above raiding human tribes or even other elven clans, should the opportunity present itself.

Although they consider themselves to all be of one tribe, tracing their lineage back to a common family, the elves are effectively divided into tribal clans. Each clan has a separate totem, a *quoyai* or "spirit-protector," that can be called upon in times of great danger to the clan. Totem clans include the Tiger, Bear, Fox, Horse, Snake, and Falcon. All the elf clans are exceptionally skilled in the handling of the horse and bow, surpassing even the best horsemen of the human tribes.

Between the humans and the elves are the Goblin Villages. Long hunted by the elves and persecuted by the humans, the goblins have formed a loose collection of family- based villages in the Ilquar Mountains. Located on the peaks overlooking the trade routes, each village is little more than a mud-brick and stone fortress. Around these the goblins hunt, grow a few meager crops, and raid their human and elven neighbors. Centuries of coexistence have taught them not to molest the caravans that move along the trade routes and sometimes they will even rally to the defense of a favored merchant.

Finally, along the coast near the mouth of the Tiderun are Rudil, Milgath, and Barask—the New Cities of the League of Minotaurs. These three cities are relatively new, as the oldest (Rudil) was founded only 123 years ago. Rudil has prospered but not grown, its size restricted by the treaty negotiated with the Uigan in the early years of its founding. Still, it is the largest of the three cities, the other two being trading outposts that have arisen to accommodate the increasing flow of trade between the League and Northern Hosk.

Currently, the Uigan are the dominant power on the steppes. Their tribe numbers approximately 60,000 to 70,000 people, divided between 130 different family clans. However, sheer numbers alone would not be enough to make the Uigan formidable. At other times, the total membership in the tribe has been much greater. The Uigan have been successful because they have a strong leader, Yakinf Boyla (Boyla being the chieftain's title), who has kept the family clans unified.

The Uigan dominate the steppes between the ocean and the Ilquar Mountains and patrol the Tamogiur, thus effectively controlling the majority of trade throughout the Tamire.

Loosely allied to the Uigan are the Purgi and Pureshk tribes, smallest of the remaining human tribes. The Kazar live in the far northern end of the Tamire along both sides of Uesi Ilquar. They migrate to the southwestern end of the Panak Desert during the short summer season and then return to their traditional winter grounds in the northern Ilquars at the beginning of the fall. The Kazar are fierce warriors, skirmishing frequently with the Uigan, Elf Clans, and the Ice People of the Panak, but their numbers are small; the entire tribe contains perhaps 30,000 people.

The Alan-atu are a mountain people, raising herds in the green valleys of the Ilquars. Their concerns are much more with the Goblin Villages and raiding Uigan horsemen than with seldom-encountered elven raiders.

On the inland side of the Ilquar ranges, the Tamire is dominated by the Elf Clans. Altogether, the clans have a population of about 50,000. However the elves are much divided by long-standing intra-tribal feuds, thus preventing them from effective action against their neighbors. Only the elves' berserk intensity as warriors has prevented the Uigan and the Kazar from encroaching deeply into their lands.

THE UIGAN

The Uigan people are a short, slender race. Skin tones range from a pale, weathered brown to yellow-white. The head is somewhat narrow and long. Unlike their Kazar cousins, Uigan heads are not deformed or shaped during childhood. Eyes are dark with the characteristic epicanthic fold. The nose is somewhat flattened and the cheekbones are usually high and prominent. The chin is sharp and strong. Most Uigans have coarse black or dark red hair. Light brown or blond hair is virtually unknown. (When it does occur it is normally the result of marriages outside the Uigan/Kazar group.) Men have fine-textured facial hair; carefully groomed beards and mustaches are not uncommon.

Aside from these biological characteristics, Uigan appearance is quite distinctive. An Uigan male, upon coming of age, has blue-black tattoos applied to his cheekbones and forehead. The pattern of the tattoo varies according to family; the size and number of the tattoos give a general indication of the prowess and rank of the wearer.

Fighting men shave their heads, except for a single lock on the left side. This lock is braided and bound with a silver clasp. Priests shave their heads completely. Other men (wizards and slaves) wear their hair long. Slaves are not allowed to bind their hair in any manner, while wizards commonly fix theirs into long braids. Uigan women allow their hair to grow long and then draw it up on top of the head, fastening it with gold and silver bands and covering the top with a small cap. Before a woman is married, this cap is commonly white (which is considered an auspicious color). After marriage the cap worn is normally red or blue, depending on the particular family custom! No special provisions are made to distinguish children of either sex.

Clothing is normally made from leathers or felts of wool, horse, or camel hair. Silks, bought from the League traders, are worn for special occasions. Traditional men's colors are blue, brown, and yellow, while women tend to blue and red. A man's costume normally consists of loose-fitting pantaloons, a woolen tunic that reaches to the knees, and a vest. Hard-soled, soft leather boots with slightly up-turned toes are worn to protect against the cutting edges of the tall grass. In colder weather, fur-lined robes and mittens are added. Finally, no Uigan rider would be complete without his distinctive pointed cap. This is normally made of felt and lined with fur, extending down into a huge neck-piece and ear-flaps. In winter a heavy leather and fur version is worn.

Uigan women wear the same boots and a longer, dress-like version of the man's tunic. In place of the pointed cap, they wrap their heads in heavy wool cowls, the tops of their hairpieces thrusting out through the back. Children wear simple long robes and use a softer slipper for the feet. All Uigan—male and female, youngest to eldest—carry a knife, called an "arrow-knife." To give up one's arrow-knife is the equivalent of surrender.

In wartime, each warrior outfits himself as best he can. The majority are lightly-armored mounted bowmen. A standard kit would include robe-like armor of padded leather and quilted cloth, two compound short bows, 400 arrows, a hand-axe, and two light lances.

Nobles and wealthy tents provide the heavy cavalry—riders fitted with splint armor, medium lance, compound short bow and arrows, and long sword, while the horse has splint barding. In addition each man will normally have a number of other personal weapons—daggers, maces, and battle axes being most common.

There is no standard uniform, although those of a particular family may adopt some identifying piece of dress. Furthermore, each man wears as fine clothing and armor as he can afford. Sable, marten, and tiger skins or horsetail plumes are all used for decorations.

The Uigan are a nomadic people, wandering up and down the length of the Tamire during the course of a year. They do not have fixed dwellings but live in tents (called *yurts)* made of thick felt and leather. The yurt is stretched over a light wicker frame. The dirt floor is covered with a thick layer of carpets and cushions. During good weather cooking is done outdoors; fires are brought indoors during periods of rain or extreme cold.

It is said by others that the Uigan will eat anything. Certainly it is known that they dine on the flesh of sheep, horses, camels, antelope, deer, dogs, and even mice in times of desperation. A favored feast item is a "twice-suckled lamb," considered to be more tender and fortifying than normal meat. Their principal drink is mare's milk and it forms a regular part of their diet. They drink it straight, make it into yogurt, press it into curds, and even let it ferment into a strong drink called *kumiss.* When on the march or on campaign, they eat strips of dried meat softened under the saddle, curds of dried mare's milk, and a porridge of millet, mare's milk, and animal blood. What few vegetables they eat are normally gathered from the wild and they eat virtually no fruit, except for berries when these are in season.

Agriculture is not an Uigan forte. They depend on the herds of horses, sheep, and camels for most of their food and clothing needs. In addition, these animals are their main item of trade with the League merchants. Uigan horses, like all those of the Tamire, are noted for their toughness and are valued throughout the cities of the league. In exchange for livestock, leather, and felt, they receive finished goods, such as silk and brassware along with millet and rice.

Like other steppe tribes, the Uigan are noted as riders and bowmen. Their sharp eyesight is legendary, as is their skill in fieldcraft. Throughout the Tamire and even in the lands beyond it, the Uigan are valued as guides and trackers. Their nomadic life has given them an exceptional ability to remember places and shapes. They have even mastered the rudiments of stellar navigation although few, if any, have any experience on the sea. They are noted as leather workers, hides being one of the few natural resources they have on hand.

Uigan Society

The Uigan tribe is composed of about 130 different family clans. Each family clan, averaging about 480 members, comprises several distinct family groups all related by blood or marriage. Each family occupies a yurt or tent. In addition to family members, a tent may also have a number of bond servants or slaves associated with it.

The leadership of a tent is divided between internal and external functions.

The managing of the household, including the maintenance of the herds and responsibility for foaling, is directed by the First Wife. Normally, the First Wife is the first one taken by the head of the household. However, he can name another favored wife, if he chooses. Since the oldest son of First Wife is automatically considered the heir, there is often fierce rivalry among the wives for the affections of the head of the family. The external matters (negotiating with other tents, arranging marriages, and attending clan councils) are handled by the head of the household, who has the highest standing within the tent. The head is the oldest male of the direct branch (usually the father or grandfather). If he is dead, then the title falls to his brother or his oldest son (if of age).

The family clan is ruled by a ***tegin*** or prince, drawn from the founding tent of the clan. This tent forms the noble class of the clan. Thus, within a family clan there is a nobility traced from the founder of the clan through the eldest male son (or brother when there are no surviving sons) and several cadet branches (the children of daughters, brothers, and a few sons). Over the years some clans die out (as there are no male offspring), while others grow to the point where they divide to form two related clans. It can fairly be said that all the clans of the Uigan are related to each other to one degree or another.

Once every year, the tegin gather to

elect a boyla (great prince or duke). At the council, the tegin of the four boyla families (the families that claim a direct bloodline to the first family of the tribe) offer themselves or others as possible candidates. Although the system is ostensibly democratic, it has none of the legal limitations of more civilized governments. Lobbying, threats, bribery, duels, and even murder are all part of the process. Of course, violence will result in feuds and the possible break-up of the tribe. As the field is narrowed to a few candidates, the tegin show their support by placing their yurts closest to the candidates they favor. Often this also results in the tribe dividing into feuding factions. It has even led to the creation of separate warring tribes. On rare occasions (such as now under the rule of Yakinf Boyla) the tribe is unified behind a single strong leader.

Uigan society is a curious mix of patriarchal and matriarchal attitudes. Men and women are considered to have equal rights. Either can divorce the other with very little effort, although wrongful divorce can bring shame to both parties involved and may even erupt into feuds. Property is considered to be under the husband's jurisdiction while he is alive, but upon death his widow is allowed to reclaim her wedding gifts before the inheritance is passed on. Surnames are not used by the Uigan (each person having a single name), but family names are taken from the mother of the clan. Thus a man's full name might be Mercho of the Taraqua Clan, Taraqua being the name of his father's mother.

There are two Uigan blessings given at weddings that best describe the basic Uigan view of this relationship. After the two families have secretly negotiated the marriage of their children, after the groom has performed the "yaquadin" or ritual kidnapping of the bride, and after the blood-gifts have been exchanged between the two families, the new son-in-law returns to live with his in-laws. At the leave-taking from his parents, the father solemnly stands (after drinking quantities of fermented mare's milk) and says, "I cast you out. You are the son of your father no more. May you bring your new father many heads of his enemies. His enemies are our enemies. When you visit my door your bow may be strung."

Upon arriving at the camp of his in-laws, the bride's father greets him saying, "Found is my son, bought with my blood! May you sire many daughters to bring us honor among the clans. May you sire many sons to bring us the heads of our enemies. When you sleep in my tent your bow may be strung." From that day forth the groom's father-in-law is considered his father (and he becomes the heir of his new father, fitting into the family heirarchy as a son in the birth position that his wife occupied), while his natural mother continues to be legally considered his mother. Thus, he has one parent in each camp.

Within the tribe there are several recognized levels of society. At the lowest level are the bond servants and slaves. Above these are the common tribesmen. The clan nobility forms the next social class, while the priests (and priestesses) are generally considered to be even more important. At the highest levels of society are the nobles of the boyla's council and the boyla himself. Outside of the tribe and yet still a part of it are the wizards and the mysterious priests of Mislaxa.

Bond servants, tribesmen who are working off their debts or the obligations of their families, are of the lowest social level. Slaves are normally prisoners taken in raids. Although all are forced to wear the cangue (a heavy wooden wheel-shaped yoke) except when working, the status accorded the prisoner varies with his rank. Thus, common tribesmen receive no special considerations while those of noble blood receive significantly better treatment. Important prisoners are moved to different family tents on a regular basis, both to spread out the burden of watching the prisoner and to keep the prisoner from affecting the loyalties of his warders.

The common tribesmen, who comprise the majority of the people, are theoretically all equal in standing. In truth, a tribesman's importance varies with his wealth, personality, and blood relation to the tegin of the clan.

The importance of tegin within the tribe can also vary according to a number of factors. Foremost of the tegin are those of the boyla families. Second are those tegin who lead the largest families, for they have the authority and wealth to make their wishes known. Then come the majority of tegin, of moderate wealth or poor, neither powerful or shunned. Finally the least important, but most dangerous, are those tegin who oppose the current boyla. This opposition may be due to ancestral feuds or to stubborn and foolish opposition to the boyla, particularly during the election council.

Uigan Priests

The priests of the Uigan occupy a unique and troubling position. Before the advent of the Cataclysm their powers made them respected and important. With the Flight of the Gods, the priests discovered themselves stripped of the open displays of their authority. Denied their spells and their powers, they were unable to heal the injured, cure the sick, or stem the raging epidemics of new disease. Feeling betrayed by its priests, the tribe lost much of its respect for them.

The priesthoods reacted to this disaster in two ways. The foremost group was the priestesses of Jijin (Chislev), the great goddess of the Tamire. Before, their powers had helped protect the herds, aid in the birthing, and ensure good hunting. When they were suddenly deprived of their spells, the priestesses were flung into chaos.

Although many lost faith, those who remained continued to perform the ceremonies as they had before Hiteh's Night. Where possible, they took credit for natural events, citing their works as success in stemming the tide of evil and disaster. Every child who recovered from plague was saved by Jijin. Every wound healed in secret by a Mislaxan priest was a public intervention by Jijin. Over the decades, new ceremonies were created until the priesthood of Jijin had formulated a whole series of rites, offerings, ceremonies, and procedures that must be followed.



Central to the Jijin priesthood is the horse. Jijin priestesses can easily be identified by their white robes and their caps adorned with black horsetail plumes.

At the beginning of spring, an offering of burned horsehair is made to Jijin. On Midsummer Night the priesthood meets at sacred sites (generally barren hilltops) and prepares bonfires. The colts and foals are gathered to be named. Several adepts blood each animal, giving it a pattern of scars on the flank that identify the particular clan. Others anoint the animal with mare's milk sprinkled from a horsehair whip. Finally, the leading priestess of the group gives the horse a secret name, whispering this in its ear. During the ceremony, no men are allowed to attend the rite. The women of the clan assist with the handling of the horses.

During the foaling season, the priestesses assist in the birthing. The priestesses also take the most promising children and teach them the ancient histories and many of the arts that would have been lost otherwise.

Through persistence, education, rituals, and cunning, the Jijin priesthood has regained much of its lost status. The priestesses now commonly serve as advisors to all the tegin. Furthermore, their knowledge and training has made them useful as ambassadors and negotiators between the different clans and even to other tribes. A priestess may be called on to negotiate a marriage, fix a blood-price to end a feud, or carry diplomatic messages to the Kazar. They are indispensable to the tegin in dealing with the League merchants, who have a reputation for trickery and deceit. Because of all these things, the priestesses are normally accorded an equal or even greater status than the average tegin.

In the last few years a new event has sent the ranks of the priesthood into turmoil. With little explanation, Jijin has returned her powers to some of her priestesses—the most faithful and dedicated. This unprecedented sign of favor has created a schism of the priesthood into two factions—those favored by Jijin and those not so fortunate. There have been several synods called to develop a reason for the event, but currently no answer can be given that satisfies the leaders of the priesthood.

The men of the tribe also maintain a special priesthood devoted to Qu'uan the Warrior (Kiri-Jolith). The priests and the followers are all male. Priests of Qu'uan can be identified by their heavily quilted robes, done up in imitation of war armor, and metal caps. The priests do not have regular rites; they meet and use their powers only when the situation requires it.

The priests of Qu'uan concern themselves with war and manhood. The most important ceremony they preside over is the "anda" or rite of passage into manhood. Taking place at age 14, a boy's anda is a major event. The father invites guests from the other men of the encampment and prepares a feast in his son's honor. The number and status of the guests is an important way of showing the family's social status, so normally no effort is spared.

At the ceremony, the boy is presented to the priests by his father. The boy is expected to recite the lineage of his family

to the priests as proof of his worthiness. The priests then cast brass knucklebones to determine the omens of the boy's future. These omens are told to the assembled guests and may result in great rejoicing or despair and gloom for the family. After this, the priests take the boy and smoke his body in a sacred fire of willow wood and dung. They then apply his facial tattoo, the mark of manhood. Once tattooed the boy is given a man's name. Thereafter he is considered a man of the tribe and is invited to the feast as the guest of honor.

The other major function of the priests is to bless warriors before going into battle. This is a very simple process, but no man feels safe without the word of the priest on the eve of a battle. Only reckless leaders go to war without having their standards dipped in mingled milk and blood of a mare.

Before the Cataclysm there were priests of Qu'uan who were able to perform great wonders, but those times have long passed. However, unlike the priestesses of Jijin, the priests of Qu'uan suffered little upheaval from the loss of their powers.

Although they lost their powers, the priests continued as before, claiming credit for victories, while blaming failure on some act displeasing to Qu'uan.

The stories of priests from before the Cataclysm became those of legendary war heroes. Indeed they have been exaggerated in the telling. Over the years she priests have developed a practice of accepting gifts for services, particularly for the anda. The better the gifts given, the greater the likelihood of a fortunate reading of the omens, the all-important part of the anda. At the same time, the priests generally take care not to abuse this power. The more positive readings they give, the more business they will have.

Like the other gods, Qu'uan has returned his power to a select few of his faithful. This threatens to create a major power shift among the families. Suddenly there are war priests with real powers. The families who have these priests have managed to increase in power and prestige, all at the expense of those families served by "impostors." Several of the less-fortunate priests have been executed by the tegin of their camp when unable to match the abilities of rivals in other encampments. This is causing a crisis of major proportions for the family clans.

The priests and priestesses of Mislaxa have adapted to the new world of Taladas in an entirely different way.

When the disaster of the Cataclysm occurred, those of Mislaxa who remained or survived attempted to continue with their healing ways, relying on their scanty knowledge of herbs and medicine. In the 20 years that they were abandoned by their goddess, the priests learned many of the secrets of natural healing. Even though they had lost the greatest of their powers, their healing arts helped them remain respected and favored. When they regained their powers, they adjusted accordingly.

Just as is happening now with Jijin, not every priest of Mislaxa regained his abilities—only those who were faithful and devout. Many who failed to pass this test left the calling, some bitter and some relieved. Nonetheless, some remained to continue in their herbal studies and to assist their empowered brothers and sisters. At the same time, the priests were compelled by Mislaxa to cloak their newfound powers in secrecy and double-talk. Eventually the Mislaxan priests formed a secret society and disappeared from the regular life of Taladas.

Eday, even though the true gods have returned to Krynn, the priests of Mislaxa continue to work in secret. After over 200 years, secrecy has become a part of their ritual that cannot be abandoned. Because of this, Mislaxan priests and priestesses (for the cult makes no distinction by sex) wear no open symbols of their faith other than a simple brown coat, often patched and threadbare. The priests also use secret hand-signs to identify themselves to each other when necessary. These signs are generally not known to the common Uigan, although they are sometimes revealed to others.

Mislaxans have no altars, churches, or other public symbols of power. Scattered throughout the land are sites of power or importance to the religion. These are either memorized or marked by secret signs. All paraphernalia associated with the worship of Mislaxa is kept highly secret, shown only at special ceremonies that only the initiated can attend.

Charged with the need for secrecy, all the priests of Mislaxa are wanderers, more nomadic than the nomads they live among. They normally travel alone or with one or two other people, customarily an herbalist helper, an acolyte, or both.

A Mislaxan priest renounces all connection to family and clan, adopting the religion as his new home. Thus such priests are strangers among every clan they visit. Arriving in a strange village, a priest relies on the traditional hospitality of the Uigan and the customs that have arisen among the people about their cult. A stranger in brown robes is almost always treated with great respect by the clan members.

The priests of Mislaxa do not preach to the masses. Indeed, they strive for anonymity, only revealing themselves when they must. Virtually nothing is done by the priests to spread the beliefs of Mislaxa through words. Instead, they rely entirely upon deeds. They are sworn to cure the sick, heal the wounded, and alleviate the pain of the suffering. At the same time, the demands of secrecy prevent them from offering their services when they arrive.

Typically, when a priest arrives in an encampment, he is received with great respect by the tegin. If anyone in the camp is sick or injured, the tegin offers the priest the hospitality of his yurt, an invitation the priest refuses as too great an honor. Normally the invitation is pressed upon him until he accepts, although particularly miserly or mean tegin may take him at his word. No mention is made of the priest's abilities or the needs of the encampment at this time.

After the priest has sampled the hospitality of the tent, he can be approached by those in need of his services. The tribesmen come to the door of the tegin's tent where they are allowed to entreat the priest for his aid. Unless there are exceptional reasons, the priest then attends to the needs of the supplicants, using both spells and herbs to heal and cure. During

his stay, the priest is normally gifted with small and useful things—clothing, knives, food, perhaps even a new horse—given according to the ability of the household.

Thus, through his services, the priest receives those things he needs to continue in his journeys. There is no set time that the priest will stay; typically it is long enough to help all those in need of aid. Whatever the length of time, the priest always moves on. He may hear of suffering among another camp or may decide there is nothing more for him to do here.

One problem for the priests is fraud. Impostors sometimes dress in the brown robes and pass themselves off as Mislaxan priests. Those frauds who have attempted the trick risk a horrible death if discovered by the tribesmen. Since the mysteries are kept secret, they can dupe others by going through the motions of healing and casting spells, but those with suspicious minds will begin asking uncomfortable questions. Worse yet is the chance of meeting someone who does know something about the Mislaxan cult and can ask the right questions. The punishment for impostors is death, normally by drawing and quartering. Such a charlatan cannot expect much in the way of mercy.

The second major difficulty faced by the priests is the refusal of hospitality or outright assault. In their own way, the priesthood has developed the perfect defense against this. Should one of their following meet with ill treatment at the hands of a tegin or his people, other priests simply cut that family off from future aid. This may only be for a short period (to demonstrate their power) or can be permanent (in the case of gross cruelty). The tegin who has offended the priesthood often finds himself forcibly replaced by a more practical tegin.

Since they do not preach and they try to keep their practices secret, the Mislaxan priests must use extraordinary measures to fill their ranks. They are always watchful for quick and bright young minds who might be trainable as priests. They are not above persuading a youth to flee from his family in the night, nor will they turn down a promising lad who asks to come along. Among some families, the Mislaxans are feared as kidnappers of children almost as much as they are respected as healers.

Once an acolyte priest has been accepted, he travels with his master, training as he goes. Over the course of a year, more or less, the acolyte is taught the fundamental mysteries of the Mislaxan faith. There is no attempt to teach the spells or herbal skills.

Once all the rituals and lessons have been learned, the acolyte is brought forward for initiation in the secret mysteries. A conclave of 20 or more priests gathers at one of the places of power. This only occurs on nights when Ne'ugiar (Nuitari) is setting and Toyaqual (Solinari) is rising.

The acolyte is presented to Mislaxa, along with a record of his teachings and deeds. During the ceremony he is exposed to the "Heart of Truth," a secret never revealed by any Mislaxan and thus the center of fearsome rumors. If the acolyte passes the test, he is receives the spells and granted powers of a beginning Mislaxan priest. Only those who have passed the test are allowed to wear the brown robes of a priest.

Uigan Wizards

Outside all of Uigan society are the wizards. Almost every encampment has a yurt whose members all practice the arts of sorcery. Male wizards are easy to spot, since none bear the tattoos of the anda common to every other Uigan man. The wizard family is excluded from most social activities (such as a boy's anda) and yet is treated with great deference by the tribe. The clan does not hate the family, but treats it as a special group outside the normal social life.

There are many taboos that govern relations with a wizard. For example, an Uigan will not eat or sleep in the same tent with, buy a horse from, dance with, wear the clothing of, or drink from the cup of a wizard. These taboos mostly exist out of fear. The common herdsman is terrified of the powers of wizards, so he tries to avoid any possibility of offending one in everyday life. The Uigan reason that by isolating the wizards, they cannot accidentally cause offense.

The wizards themselves do not find this offensive, for this is the way it has always been. The treatment they receive from the tribe recognizes and respects their difference. In exchange for enduring the taboos, they seldom have to worry about their own needs. Tribal members are customarily expected to provide for the needs of the wizard and his family by providing food and goods needed. In exchange, the wizard gives the spells and advice the clan needs. Although travelers find the arrangement curious, it has worked for the Uigan for as long as they know. At the same time, the Uigan have no qualms about attacking non-clan or tribal wizards. Their fear of sorcerous powers encourages them to view all strange wizards as threats.

The wizards of the Uigan are universally renegades, not adhering to the laws of the Robed Orders (which are much weaker throughout Taladas, anyway). Although few tend to specialize, those that do tend to be abjurers and invokers. They are not common enough to form into large groups or play a tremendous part in battles, but many a clever tegin has made good use of their powers.

Uigan Justice

On the surface, Uigan law is very simple and direct. Criminals are judged by the tegin. When the case involves two families, the two must find a third tegin willing to act as judge. This is a delicate matter. All the families are related, therefore the judge must be no closer in kin to one side or the other.

The judge cannot bear ancestral loyalties or grudges against either side. Nor can there be any obligations on the judge or any owed to him by either party. Finally, in what may be the most difficult condition of all, the judge and his family clan cannot be of lesser standing than either clan in the dispute. In some instances this requires the case be heard by the boyla and no other.

Once a judge is found, the case is presented. If the matter is clear, there is no

difficulty. More often than not, the tegin must make a decision based on the claims and characters of the parties involved. Decisions are not necessarily based on truth, but what is best for the clan. Judgments are designed to preserve clan unity and strengthen the ties of clan loyalty.

For criminal acts, punishments are normally severe and limited by tradition and social standing. For example, if a man of low standing kills a clansman of higher standing, he and his tent can be exiled from the clan. If the situation were reversed, the payment of a blood-price would suffice. If a man of low standing kills a higher status man of another clan, the criminal can be claimed as a bond slave for a set period of time. If a man of high standing kills a lower status man from another clan, a blood-price to the injured family and the injured tegin would both be required.

Should a settlement be refused, the injured party and any kin who care to ally with them can legally raid the camp of the criminal. The extent of the raid is limited only by the savagery of the attackers. Those raided can defend themselves but have no rights of complaint against the attack. They are seen as having invited the attack upon themselves.

When property is stolen, particularly livestock, the injured party (and any who wish to join him) can reclaim his property by tracking and killing the thief. If this is done before the thief returns to his clan, there is very little claim that can be made against the tracker. However, if the thief manages to return to his clan, a claim for the stolen property must be made with his tegin. Thereafter the claim is negotiated as before.

Of course, these legal proceedings and niceties apply only within the tribe. Non-Uigans cannot expect merciful or necessarily just treatment if accused of a crime. Their best recourse is the threat of fearful retaliation (a threat the Elf Clans excel at) or bribery (which the League merchants must sometimes resort to). Otherwise the penalty for a crime is normally enslavement or death.

THE ELF CLANS

The inland side of the Tamire is dominated by the *hosk'i imou merkitsa* or "people of the land before [the Cataclysm]." These are the Elf Clans of the Tamire, infamous among travelers for their wild savagery. Although they are pressured on all sides by races more fertile and numerous than themselves, they have managed to keep most of their ancestral lands through their fierce and warlike ways.

The elves of the Tamire are short, lean-muscled people. The average height is 5'4" . Unlike other species of elves, those of the Elf Clans do not have a appreciable difference in height between males and females. Skin tones range from coffee-brown to honey-tan, in part from the inevitable intermingling with Uigan in eons past. Their hair color ranges from fine honey-blond to brown, although coarse black hair is also known (again probably the result of ancient Uigan blood).



Facially, the elves have drawn chins and thin noses. Their mouths tend to be small and thin and the teeth are somewhat sharper and more pointed than those of humans. Their eyes are more slanted but do have the characteristic fold of the Tamire people. Their foreheads appear higher than most due to the fact that their hairlines are more receded than those of humans.

Beards and moustaches are almost non-existent since their facial hair is very pale and fine. Their ears come almost to a point and the lobes are long, as it is their practice to pierce and stretch these with large plugs.

The people of the Elf Clans are somewhat vain about their appearance and go to great lengths to present a colorful display. Elven males allow their hair to grow long and then fix it into braids. Normal practice has one braid behind each ear and another down the back of the neck. These are normally fastened with carved wood or silver fastenings. The length of these braids is a point of pride and it is not uncommon to see males with hair reaching almost to their waists. The hair is kept lustrous and supple by applications of an ointment made from animal fat and fragrant herbs.

The males also wear earlobe-plugs decorated with silver baubles, feathers, and beads. Male dress is very similar to the Uigan—loose pants, over- tunic, belt, and boots.

Although they prefer to be bareheaded, in times of intense heat the males wear a simple cloth turban. During the winter they wear fur caps trimmed with silver decorations. They also wear heavy fur coats, cut like dusters and fastened with elaborately carved wooden ties.

Elven females wear similar clothing to the males. However, the over-tunic is longer and slit up the front and back.

Each half can be tied at the ankle or left free. The females are also more likely to wear silken pantaloons instead of the normal woolen ones worn by the males. Like the men, they allow their hair to grow long. Instead of braiding, they pull their hair up and bind it in buns on the sides or fasten it with combs into a cascading fan-shape in the back. Married women dye their front bangs with henna, giving them a red-brown color. Widows mark their cheeks with an angled scar as a sign of their grieving. The number of scars is an indication of the number of husbands a female has outlived.

The clothes worn are commonly more colorful and patterned than those of the Uigan. Virtually any color is worn, although reds, yellows, blues, and greens are most common. Clothing is normally woven or printed in broad stripes, floral patterns, or clan totems.

Leathers are seldom left in natural colors—red, green, and black being the most common dyes. Like the other tribes of the Tamire, the elves use wool and felt, but they also wear more silks, linens, and cottons obtained in trading with the League merchants. Winter clothes make greater use of fine pelts. Overcoats of rabbit, marten, sable, and fox are all common and are trimmed with even more exotic furs—bobcat, tiger, bear, griffon, and giant weasel.

When raiding, the typical warrior wears a robe of heavily padded leather or quilted cloth with a large, upright stiff collar to protect the neck and ears. A small metal cap protects the head. Normally this is adorned with the clan totem—a fox tail, eagle feathers, etc.

The weapons carried are similar to those used by the Uigan—an overdrawn composite short bow, arrows, light lance, and sword. The horse is normally unarmored, but is dressed with tassels and coverings. Some clans dress in special war clothes—tight-fitting suits made to resemble the clan's totem spirit.

Most fearsome of the Uigan are the elite warriors of the Tiger clan. Dressed in yellow and black striped padded leather pants and shirt and wearing a tiger-faced cap of steel and leather, these warriors are considered the most wild and berserk of all the clans. Few who know of their reputation can face them when they imitate the coughing roar of a steppe tiger.

In addition to lightly armored warriors, each clan has a small group of heavy cavalry. These riders wear scale armor and wield long swords and maces. The horse is normally fitted with scale half-barding. In general, however, the elves favor light cavalry, preferring speed and quickness to striking power.

Elven Society

In many ways the elves of the Tamire live a life very much like that of their human neighbors the Uigan. They are a nomadic people, living in yurts and dependent upon their herds of horses for most of their livelihood. They generally share the same sense of values as the Uigan—a respect for family, reverence of horses, and a strong sense of position within the clan. They have an even greater lust for battle than the Uigan and every male, no matter what his calling, is expected to be a warrior. Racially different from all other tribes, the elves tend to be even more suspicious of strangers and arrogant about their own superiority than do the prideful and haughty boyla families of the Uigan.

The most basic level of group identity among the elves is the family. This includes more than just immediate parents and children, due in part to the long life spans of the elves. Thus a single family can include five to six generations and also encompasses uncles, aunts, and all their children. Two to four of these extended families are normally bound together by close ties of blood and marriage into a single clan.

The clan is the only political unit with any authority among the elves. Although they recognize the concept of the tribe (all clans trace their ancestry back to a single family), it is not a functional part of their society. The elves do not elect a single tribal ruler. Each clan is more or less independent of all others, doing as it pleases within the web of loyalties and feuds among the different clans.

This network of who likes or hates whom is what governs all but most significant of inter-clan activities. It dictates the movements of clans to new grazing grounds, the seating arrangements at the rare grand councils, the permissible inter-clan marriages, and the rights of prisoners taken in raids. Every elf of the tribe is very conscious of his clan's position in relation to all others. Indeed, names consist of three parts: first the clan name, then the family name, and finally the personal name.

Each clan is identified with a particular totem, called a quoyai or spirit protector—a particular animal spirit that can be called upon in times of need. Originally, before the coming of the Cataclysm, each clan was led by a shaman who able to commune directly with the quoyai. A few of the clans are still led by shamans who were alive before Hiteh's Night. In general, however, the Flight of the Gods caused a minor revolution in the leadership of the clans. Where before each clan tended to be led by the most devout person of the clan, after Hiteh's Night power shifted to the most astute politician of the clan.

Thus many of the clan leaders over the next 200 years, while posing as shamans, actually have no religious pretensions at all. The few shamans that have remained in power have had to struggle with guilt and self-doubt. Several of these shamans have led their clans into attempting to expiate some long-forgotten ancestral sin while others have adopted curious and complicated taboos to avoid behavior they believe was the cause of their abandonment. Thus the members of the Horse Clan cannot eat the flesh or drink the milk of a horse, as had been their ancient custom, while those of the Bear Clan cannot drink water on the day they set out on a raid.

Now the quoyai have returned. Only in a few cases has the shaman of the clan remained devout enough receive the powers the quoyai bestows. In most cases the quoyai has revealed itself (either through event or vision) to a worthy member of the clan. This lucky (or unlucky) soul has been granted the powers

of the shaman and the quoyai expects the chosen one to assume leadership. This is not as simple as it sounds. The current "shamans," for the most part, don't care to relinquish control. They have accused the chosen ones of heresy, blasphemy, and possession by evil spirits. The clans are in turmoil,

Unlike the Uigan, elven society is clearly patriarchal. The father rules the family, both in the tent and outside it. Sons are more favored than daughters for their usefulness to the clan in raiding and war. Inheritances pass from father to sons, normally divided between them all. Females do not have the rights of divorce or property that Uigan women do. In legal cases they are considered of lower status than males of the same rank.

However, females are not totally subservient. Just as with males, all females are expected to be warriors, though seldom as skilled as the males. The arts of magic are practiced almost exclusively by females. Those male wizards that exist are exceptions to the norm. They are often outcast and may even be treated by the rest of the tribe as if they were female. Each elven wizardess proclaims one of the moons of Krynn as her guide, choosing which according to her nature. Thereafter, the wizardess is subject to the waxing and waning powers governed by that moon, but she is not restricted in spell selection. Most elven wizards of the Tamire tend to specialize as enchanters or transmuters. Aside from wizardry, the females are also highly valued for their ability to bear children.

Occupying a special position within the clan structure are the half-elves. Unlike many other elven communities, little shame is attached to being a half-elf (due to the practice of *sa'qul idri*, explained later). Every clan has several distinct half-elven families. These form a separate community within the clan; they are almost equal in status to full elves. Tradition frowns on inter-marriage between half-elves and elves (so that marriages tend to be between half-elf families) and also prevents half-elves from holding the highest positions within the clan (particularly that of shaman). At the same time, the half-elves of the clan are no less respected as warriors, wizardesses, and advisors. They are an integral part of the clan. An injury or insult to a half-elven family is as much an affront to the entire clan as if the same had happened to one of the elven families.

Childbirth and children are a vital part of elves' lives. They have always had a low birth rate (due to their slow rates of maturity), but since the Cataclysm, when they lost the benefit of healing spells, successful births have dropped dramatically. Thus the occasion of a pregnancy and childbirth is one of great importance. In an effort to ensure success, the shamans have created a number of taboos and ceremonies for childbirth. The most important of these is the *sa'qul idri* or birth-rage.

When the time for childbirth comes, the *Yasua Egom* (Eldest Mother) secludes the mother-to-be in a specially purified tent of white felt. The remaining females await outside, encircling the tent, and sing the sacred songs to the clan's quoyai. No males are allowed to enter within the circle of chanters.

During this time, the father-to-be and the other males of his family prepare for the sa'qul idri. They paint their faces in special ceremonial war-masks (war paint is not worn for normal raiding) and begin a ceremony of chants and drinking. Once prepared, the males go raiding. The numbers of heads and horses brought back foretells the fortunes of the child, thus the father and his relatives fight with great savagery. By tradition, the targets of such raids are non-elven—goblins, humans, and ogres are the victims. Rumor that the elves are making a birth-rage raid is enough to instill fear and panic into most of the neighboring tribes, particularly the goblins.

Worse still is the sa'qul idri that occurs when the mother or infant dies in childbirth. Then the raiders become not just savage, but berserk with rage and anguish. Oblivious to their danger, the raiders have only one goal—to kidnap a surrogate for the one lost.

If the mother died, a human woman must be captured to raise the child. If the infant died, a child must be taken to be raised in its place. Humans raised by the clan are treated as if they are elven and are allowed to marry and create families within the clan (since they are considered "elves," they are exempt from the taboos restricting half-elven marriages). This accounts for the half-elven communities that form part of every tribe.

Still there is a lingering prejudice against them, effectively preventing a elf-raised human from leading a tribe. Human children among the elves quickly learn to be tough and thick-skinned to the taunts of their peers. Elven children sometimes learn it isn't wise to taunt a human child, since the humans mature so much faster than elves!

The other important part of the Elf Clan culture is death. Given their long life spans, natural death is a rare thing among the elves, although many more meet violent ends in raids and feuds. Each year for two weeks around Midsummer's Day, the clans gather at a site near the Turgan Oasis while their shamans perform the Ancestors' Ceremony—funeral rites for all those who have died in the past year.

This is one of the few occasions when the tribe acts as one. During the days of the ceremony, the clans maintain an uneasy truce with each other. If an offense does occur, it is judged by the entire council of shamans. The punishments for breaking the peace are traditionally severe—heavy fines or death being most common. Several famous feuds have come about because one family contrived to embarrass the family of another clan during the Ancestors' Ceremony.

During the year, the bodies of those who have died are either carried with the clan or are brought to the Turgan Oasis and left there. At the Ancestors' Ceremony, these remains are properly set to rest. Each clan has a sacred burial ground around the oasis. Bodies are placed on platforms and exposed to the elements, along with appropriate offerings to the clan's totem spirit. Carved effigies are made for the dead whose bodies could not be recovered (as sometimes occurs during a raid). New offerings are made for the ancestors of the clan.

Throughout the ceremony, the shamans of all the clans pray for the strength and safety of the tribe. Each night a different clan holds a feast, inviting guests from all the other clans. Each guest is given gifts to take back to his clan. The gifting is a complicated business. Allied clans are naturally given ample gifts. Enemies of the clan can be given lesser gifts to insult them. However, they may also receive abundant gifts to improve relations or to embarrass the receiver. Finally, each clan's gifts must be balanced against all others given to avoid accidental insult. Wise shamans are skilled in the fine art of the feast-gift.

THE ILQUAR GOBLINS

Living in the high passes of the Ilquar Mountains are the Goblin Villages. Although it is impossible to take a complete census, there are probably 40,000 goblins living in small, fortified villages throughout the two ranges. Most of the villages have populations of about 150 creatures, but there are at least ten villages having 1,000 or more goblins. The villages are scattered through most of the central and eastern sides of the mountains. Only a few are found on the western slopes, for this is the homeland of the Alan-Atu tribe. The villages are also less frequent along the northern end of Uesi Ilquar, a territory that has been claimed by the Kazar over the past few centuries.

The goblins of the Ilquar are a short, stocky race. They are heavier-set than others of their kind and are prone to pot bellies and bow-leggedness. Their skin color ranges from yellow-brown to brownish-green. The majority of the race is bald. The others have thin and wispy black hair. Infants have their heads shaped when born so that the back of the head is flat and the forehead has a pronounced slope backward. This shaping also gives them broad flat noses, a feature that is considered quite attractive among their kind. The chin is very weak, merging almost completely into the folds of the neck. The males of most villages have long, sharpened canines that jut out just below their upper lip. Most claimed females have scrolling patterns of welts tattooed around their eyes.

Goblin dress is both simple and highly ornamented. Most clothing is leather or fur; since the goblins produce only a small amount of poor-quality cloth, this material is worn infrequently. The amount and quality of clothing is a clear sign of the wealth of the goblin. Poor goblins tend to wear a simple loincloth, long tunic, and thick-soled sandals. Wealthier goblins wear leather breeches and lightweight leather armor. This may be adorned with padded shoulder plates and leggings. They too wear thick-soled sandals. Female goblins wear heavy leather dresses and cowls covering them from head to toe (so as to prevent a stranger from seeing too much). The young are most often naked except for a pair of simple sandals.

In battle, goblins tend to dress the same as in everyday life. With the exception of rare and expensive metallic armors, they do not distinguish between everyday and war dress. All the males, except those too sick or infirm, come out to fight. Typical weapons include daggers, falchions (a type of broad sword), spears, and short bows. The goblins are not horsemen, in part because of their nature and in part due to the ruggedness of the terrain.

The goblins are a settled people, each village claiming a certain amount of territory around it. They live mainly by hunting (they are exceptional at camouflage and stalking) and metal-forging, supplementing this with a few crops and occasional raids. The males are responsible for hunting, mining, smelting, and raiding. The females and children tend the fields and see to the everyday needs of the household.

The goblins mainly live on meats, simple breads, and a few paltry vegetables. They have learned to brew a strong drink, *issca,* from a combination of mushrooms and grain. This is flavored with the dried buds of certain bushes and mashed fruits, then allowed to ferment in earthen pots. In the wintertime, the fermented mixture is allowed to partially freeze to increase the strength of the drink. Issca has a woody, thick taste and has a heady effect on those unused to its power.

The sludge from the brewing is dried in sheets and then used as march rations called *issache.* Issache is high in protein and quite nourishing, if it can be stomached. It is quite tough and unpalatable. On campaign, goblin warriors typically soften a piece for chewing by sticking it between the foot and sandal and leaving it there for the day. They also eat jerky, drying the meat of virtually any creature they can catch. The Ilquar goblins are not noted for their fastidious cuisine.

Although the goblins are organized into villages, they are still, at heart, a simple-minded and brutal race. The village system has evolved over the course of centuries as the best protection from their enemies. It is not, although they like to claim it is, evidence that the goblins are more culturally advanced than their human or elven neighbors.

Within each village, the goblins still abide by the rule of force common to other goblin tribes. The male goblin best able to terrorize or exterminate his opposition is the headman of the village. While this is sometimes the strongest goblin, it is more often the most cunning and clever. Even the goblins have discovered that brains are more important than muscle. Assisting the headman are a number of chosen companions, bully boys as it were. These aides are normally brutal thugs, not very bright but obedient and ruthless. They carry out the orders of the headman and do his dirty work.

Advising the headman is a small council of other wise (or cunning) goblins. Some of these are allies that must be rewarded while others are enemies too powerful or important to terrorize, ignore, or murder. These goblins normally have their own bully boys (though not as powerful or effective as the headman's) and present the greatest threat to the headman's rule. Indeed, in some villages, the headman is little more than a figurehead following the directions of a powerful advisor.

No matter who is in charge, the goblins are very political. There are constant schemes to remove, weaken, or just em-

barrass some enemy on the council (or ruling the village). Thus, the males are very conscious of status. What others consider insignificant actions may be grievous insults to the goblins. A story among the League Merchants about Haarad the Witless (a cunning merchant of many popular folk stories) tells how he caused a revolution in a goblin village simply by removing his slippers in the wrong house.

Who hosts guests, the size and number of gifts, the order of seating, the position of soldiers on the march (most important in the center or rear), type of food served, and number of females are all important courtesies that must be carefully watched. Given that fights and death may be the result of an insult, entertaining is a deadly serious affair among the goblins.

Socially, the goblins are very communistic, to a degree. Property belongs to all the village, but is held and controlled by the male strong enough to claim it. Marriage and individual families are unknown. Females are "claimed," and the number of females claimed and kept is an indication of status. Children are raised communally by the females.

Fathers make no special claim to the parentage of a child. Instead, a male goblin will occasionally visit the children's den to claim a male child. Again, the fitness of the child claimed and the frequency of visits are tied to the status of the male goblin. Thus the most powerful goblin claims the majority of healthy strong goblin boys to raise. He then raises each child as his own, teaching the boy the important skills—hunting and fighting in particular.

Some male children are never claimed for a variety of reasons. If the child is fit, he is raised by the females. By tradition, the females teach the secret rituals and knowledge of the shaman, although they are never allowed to become shamans themselves. Thus, unchosen males become the tribal shamans, a position that can often lead to great power and influence over the tribe.

Shamans are not allowed to be headmen or have a seat among the advisors—a lingering prejudice against their being unchosen as children. At the same time, they are responsible for casting the omens, attempting cures, and protecting the village from evil. Clearly, wise headmen and advisors work to keep the shaman on their side. With the return of the gods, some of the shamans have received powers from Hiteh (ever one to cause mischief). As a natural result, these shamans have used their new powers to become de facto rulers of their villages.



If the non-selection is due to deformity or infirmity, the child is normally abandoned in the wild, not necessarily in hopes that it will die, but simply to rid the village of the need for its care. A few of these abandoned children have survived to become the *gurik cha'ahl,* the dreaded ghost people. The ghost people are little more than animals. Some have lingering memories of their village and what happened to them, memories that have festered into hatred. Stories of the gurik cha'ahl are told to frighten goblin young and many evil events are blamed on them.

The goblins are notorious among the people of the Tamire as vermin. They live by hunting, but think nothing of despoiling a region, especially if it is the hunting ground of another village or tribe. They claim any kill they find, ignoring the inter-tribal custom of identifying by arrow markings. They take anything as meat, including horses, men, and elves. They set deadly traps on well-traveled trails, indiscriminately taking whatever they bag. They are wasteful, seldom using all of a kill, and normally kill more than they need. While they seldom go raiding outside their lands, they regularly ambush travelers through the mountains.

However, the goblins are also notorious as skilled smiths and traders. The Ilquar Mountains hold one of the rare deposits of easily-mined iron ore outside the gnomish realms. The locations of these deposits are jealously guarded secrets of the goblins. Through accident and outside contact, they have learned to mine and smelt the ore. Some of what they make is fashioned into weapons and crude armor, but the majority of the ore is cast into bars of pig iron for trade. A few merchants of the League make regular trips into the Ilquar Mountains.

Unlike most lands, the goblins have no centralized markets where the smelters would gather with their iron to meet with merchants. Simply put, no goblin trusts any other enough for a central market to survive. Instead, the merchants must travel a circuit from village to village, trading with each headman independent of all the others. While this adds to the merchant's time and bother, it generally works to his advantage since the goblins can't compare prices paid each village for its ore.

To make the iron trade succeed, the gob-

lins have had to do two things. First, they have learned to be canny traders. While the merchants do quite well in the trade, they don't get away with robbery. Second, the goblins have learned through experience not to ambush or rob most merchants, particularly known traders of the League. While the iron trade is useful to the League, it is not as essential to them as it is to the goblins. In the past villages that have attacked merchants and succeeded in driving them out of the region have in turn been attacked and annihilated by their irate neighbors who were displeased that trade had suddenly dried up.

Still, trade wars do occur when one village decides to flex its might. By custom, the aggressor village "invites" the merchants to its walls or requests that they remain away for a set amount of time. Thereafter, the merchants trade with other villages in the area at their own risk. Of course, those merchants who restrict their trade to the aggressor goblins are subject to reprisals by the surrounding villages. Not surprisingly, most merchants choose to stay out of the area until the fighting has settled down. The victor is usually the village best prepared to survive a long trade embargo.

Trade is so important to the goblins that in the last few decades they have begun to provide protection to the iron merchants. Within the boundaries of each village's territory, the merchants are under the protection of that headman. Occasionally a caravan is attacked by a neighboring group attempting to humiliate the protectors.

The goblins have also been extending their protection beyond the boundaries of their land. The League merchants are often accompanied by goblin raiding parties at least as far as the foothills of the Ilquar range. Sometimes these guards venture even farther, escorting the merchant onto the steppes and then scurrying back home afterward. Along the way they may make an occasional raid, but the goblins are perfectly aware they are a poor match for mounted horsemen. Instead they prefer to use their camouflage skills to make quick ambushes that leave no survivors who can report their location.

This kind of behavior does not win the goblins many friends among the humans and elves. They are constantly skirmishing with the Alan-Atu who share their mountain slopes. Their contact with the Uigan is slight, since the Alan-Atu lie between the two. It is toward the elves that goblin hatred is most intense. Whereas they sometimes take human prisoners to serve as slaves or to be held for ransom, the goblins never take elven prisoners. Whenever possible, they massacre every elf they find. Peace missions or negotiations between the two groups are impossible.

Nor are the elves any less vicious in their dealings with the goblins. They too claim no goblin prisoners and refuse to negotiate with their enemy. Elven riders frequently make raids into goblin territory, hoping to catch hunting parties or war bands well away from the safety of their towns. The walled villages of the goblins exist for this very reason. If the elves have any weakness in battle, it is their lack of skill in storming fortified places.

Normal procedure upon learning of approaching riders is for the goblins to withdraw behind their mud and stone walls and harass the elves with bowfire. Secret tunnels provide access to favored ambush points outside the town, enabling small groups of goblins to appear, attack, and disappear quickly. If the village stands and the riders leave, the goblins dog their retreat, picking off the unfortunate all the way to the edge of their territory.

Of course, the villages are no sure protection. Sometimes the elves appear without warning, catching the goblins in the fields or riding through the open gates. Sometimes their force is enough to carry the walls in a storming attack. The elves also play upon the character of the goblins. A small force may arrive outside the village, then withdraw. The goblins pursue the small band of retreating elves only to be led into a trap when more riders appear on their flanks. In the end, however, although they are outnumbered and outfought, the goblins have managed to hold their own against the wild elves of the Tamire.

THE ALAN-ATU

Living on the western slopes of the Ulquar Mountains is a semi-nomadic human tribe known as the Alan-Atu or Goat People. Their name describes much of their existence—shepherds maintaining large herds of goats and sheep that graze on the fertile, grassy slopes of the lower Ilquar. Here the thick forests of the upper reaches and the dry grassland of the steppes meet to form a border of mixed forest and grassland. It is in the fertile valleys forming this belt that the Alan-Atu live.

In appearance, the Alan-Atu share many common characteristics with the other human tribes of the Tamire. Their features are most like those of the Uigan, although the men do not have shaven heads and tattooed faces. Even at an early age, their faces develop extreme networks of wrinkles and it is not uncommon for a traveler to think he has accidentally stumbled upon a tribe of prematurely old people.

Their teeth and mustaches tend to be stained a red-brown, colored by a herbal root they commonly chew. The use of this root (which has no known properties) also means that spitting is an accepted social custom.

They dress in white, grey, and green robes of the Uigan style. In addition, they wear woolen cloaks of woodland colors that they use for camouflage and stalking. Their boots are of soft leather and trimmed with fur. In the wintertime, these are supplemented by thick felt coverings that serve as simple slippers. The men wear a cap of lambskin with long tasselled earflaps. The women cover their heads with cowls like the Uigan. Unmarried women wear veils that cover the face below the eye.

Although the Alan-Atu are not noted as warriors, each man is expected to be ready to defend the herd from predators and raiders (particularly goblins). Therefore, although there is no particular battle dress, shepherds in the pasture usually have a heavy leather robe on hand to use as armor.

Unlike the other tribes of the steppe, the Alan-Atu also make use of a shield. It

is oval, made of cured leather and wicker, and is surprisingly lightweight. A man's shield is decorated with emblems of previous kills—bits of bone, hair, pelt, or personal items taken from the dead. A very successful warriors may have several shields, each filled with the trophies he has taken, kept in his *bator* or house-tent.

The Alan-Atu are skilled in the spear and sling. Each man also carries a long, heavy-bladed curved knife called a *shildor.* The shildor is a man's all-purpose tool, used in hunting, battle, and butchering animals. It is also well-balanced for throwing and can inflict serious wounds when wielded by one skilled in its use.

As said before, the Alan-Atu are a semi-nomadic people. They shift their homes twice a year. In the spring, they leave their winter quarters and take the herds into the cooler pastures up the mountain slopes. In the fall they drive the flocks to the base of the mountains, back to their winter homes. During the summertime, the Alan-Atu live in tents set out in the pastures with their flocks. There they spend their time watching the flocks, hunting, gathering berries, curing leather, and stripping the bark from the birch trees.

In fall, they return to their bators—round, permanent homes of wood and stone. The walls are made of stacked stones that are packed into place with a mortar of straw and dung. Built without a roof, a leather tent-like cover is raised when the family returns for the winter. Each family has several bators grouped around a single stone corral for the animals. The sheep and goats are kept penned for most of the winter. Prior to the onset of the snows and ice, the family harvests the tall grasses around the bator, bundling and stacking them to use as fodder later in the season. These same grasses are spread over the floor of the house to provide insulation from the cold ground.

Alan-Atu Society

Socially the Alan-Atu view themselves as a collection of families that forms into a single tribe. Generally each family has little to do with the others except for arranged marriages and occasional disputes over pasture.

Because they are very vulnerable to goblin raids, the families have a highly developed sense of cooperation. Blood feuds are not allowed and all disputes are settled through argument and negotiation. Based on the crime, fines of sheep or other property are agreed upon by the elders of each family. Once these are paid, the issue is considered closed. On the rare occasions when a fine is refused, the other families are expected to sever all trade with the criminal until the fine is paid. Sometimes this results in division within the tribe, which is not resolved until one side or the other migrates to a new series of mountain valleys.

Women in the tribe are given equal status to the men in all instances. They may hold property and serve as family elders. Women are also expected to watch and defend the flocks, although they do not take part in the infrequent raids of the men. However, relations between the two sexes is strictly controlled, especially between young men and unmarried women. To prevent intermingling, chores are divided between two separate groups. Thus there are flocks watched only by the women and flocks tended only by the men. There are men's tents and women's tents, men's fires and women's fires. Only after a man and woman are married are they allowed to associate more freely with the entire tribe.

Alan-Atu Priests

The tribe had never developed a strong tradition of priesthood or shamanism before Hiteh's Night. Thus when the Cataclysm struck (and the true priests disappeared), Alan-Atu society was not greatly affected.

Hiteh's Night marked the rise to eminence of the bards with the Alan-Atu tribe. Today the bards, with their knowledge of ancient tales and events, act as the guides for the tribe in matters of great import. Their advice, often based on the wisdom gleaned from old songs and tales, is greatly respected and sought after. Unknowingly, the bards serve to restrict the tribe to very traditional ways and customs. In some ways this has helped preserve the unity and identity of the tribe; in other ways, it has prevented the acceptance of new ideas. Whatever the case, the bards today are not about to relinquish their positions.

Perhaps because they are not warlike, the Alan-Atu are noted for their suspicion of strangers. Ill-equipped to defend themselves from others, they are hesitant to reveal themselves to traveling strangers. They greet unfamiliar travelers warily and do not invite them into their camps as is the custom among other tribes. Instead, they have the stranger camp some distance away and then go out to visit him so he cannot inspect their numbers. When visiting they bring food for themselves so as not to be rude, but they seldom share this with the traveler. Only after they feel certain of the intentions of the traveler do they allow him into the camp.

However, once the stranger has been accepted, the family makes up for its rudeness by lavishing the traveler with gifts and feasts. Gifts include items such as birch-bark boxes, bone combs, and woolens. Alan-Atu feasts are affairs of legend, as they are known for their love of good food. A typical feast would include a whole roasted kid or mutton soaked in butter, broiled mountain trout, stewed quail with fruit, goat's milk cheeses, yogurts, wild onions, nuts, flat breads, porridges of millet, wild rice or barley swimming in honey and butter, dried fruits, sweetened spiced tea, fermented goat's milk, and fruit ciders.

The guest is given the best blankets in the house and, if the weather is cold, may be offered a live, trussed kid to act as a bed-warmer. If the guest looks promising, he may be offered a daughter for marriage, although this is usually a daughter no one else in the tribe will have for one reason or another.

The Alan-Atu women are skilled weavers and makers of felt, while the men are accomplished leather workers. These cloths and leathers, along with their livestock, are the main items the tribe has to

trade. Once a year, in the fall when the tribe comes down out of the mountains, merchants from the League and riders from the steppe people gather at the mouth of the Ur'musk Valley. This is the traditional trading site of the Alan-Atu. Here, for a week, there is a bustling trade camp.

The merchants and Uigan buy goats, lambs, cheeses, sheepskins, birch-bark baskets, tooled leathers, and cloth, while the Alan-Atu trade for metal pots, weapons, silk, silver baubles, grain, and sometimes even horses. Canny merchants bring along entertainers, while those gossips and bards among the tribes come to share stories and songs. It is one of the few times of the year when the Alan-Atu lower their traditional hostility toward strangers, allowing themselves to mingle freely.

The greatest threat to the Alan-Atu (besides the strange and horrible creatures that are sometimes found in the forests) is the goblins. Since they are not as fierce or numerous as the goblins, the Alan-Atu are a choice target of these creatures. To protect their homes and flocks, the tribesmen have become quite skilled in woodcraft. It is said that an Alan-Atu man knows when a hawk has taken prey in the next valley. While their skills are not this formidable, they have become quite talented in detecting disturbances and intruders into their lands. Thus they are very difficult to surprise and many a rash raid by the goblins has met with disaster.

THE KAZAR

Living along the northern edge of the Tamire are the Kazar people, the second largest tribe of humans on the steppe. Like their cousins, the Uigan, the Kazar are nomadic horsemen. Indeed, they are virtually identical to the Uigan in customs and appearance. To the unobservant, Uigan and Kazar are virtually indistinguishable. However, to Kazar and Uigan the differences are profound. There is a great enmity between the two tribes, even though there have been several attempts to unite them through diplomatic marriages.

Racially, Kazar and Uigan come from the same bloodstock. Thus the Kazar have the same facial characteristics, average height, build, and skin tones as the Uigan. Those differences that do appear are purely cultural. Kazar children are bound into cradle-boards fitted with a hard pillow of dried grain. As a result, all Kazar have a distinctive flattening of the back of the skull.

Unlike the Uigan, Kazar men do not shave their heads. They keep their hair trimmed short except for a knot bound up at the base of the neck. They are fond of long, braided mustaches, kept supple with rancid butter. Nor do the men tattoo their faces. Indeed, they consider this Uigan custom grotesque and revolting.

In dress, there are only two significant differences between Uigan and Kazar. Living farther to the north, the Kazar make greater use of furs and hides. Thus it is not uncommon for a man to wear a bear robe (with the fur on the inside) or heavy leather pantaloons instead of the Uigan woolens. Boots are normally fur-trimmed or lined. Kazar men wear a woolen turban wrapped in a ball about their heads, similar to the elven style. The turban cloth is dyed in a pattern of stripes, the colors denoting the tribal clan of the rider. In cold weather, the turban is covered with a long, scarf-like cowl. This comes to a point in the back and can be tied to cover most of the face and neck. They also wear snow-goggles carved from bone, something they have borrowed from the Ice People.

Kazar women and children also dress similarly to their Uigan cousins, again making a greater use of fur and leather. The women decorate their clothing with beads and fringe. Unmarried women normally wear a large number of silver adornments as a way to advertise the dowry their fathers will pay a potential husband.

The nomadic life of the Kazar carries them from the foothills of the Uesi Ilquar range to the southern reaches of the Panak Desert. Like the Uigan, they live in yurts, though theirs are primarily made of leather. They mind herds of camels and horses, along with a few flocks of sheep. They tend more camels than the Uigan, hardy bactrians able to better withstand the combined conditions of severe cold and desert. Kazar warriors often ride camels instead of horses into battle.

Having to deal with the snowier regions of the northern Tamire, the Kazar have also developed more winter skills than the Uigan (although nowhere near the arctic abilities of the Ice People). Kazar regularly use snowshoes, a novelty to the Uigan. Indeed, one of their favored raiding times is during the heavy snows of winter. Racing in on snowshoes, they strike at a Uigan or elven camp, easily able to escape over the drifts before the enemy can catch them. They are practiced trappers, bringing in many valuable winter pelts of sable, ermine, winter lynx, winter wolf, and owlbear. They fish year round, in winter standing over holes in the ice, harpoon in hand as they have learned from the Ice People.

The Kazar form an important link between the League merchants of the south and the Ice People of the far north. Few merchants ever penetrate the icy wastes of the Panak Desert and fewer still come back from there. Instead, most goods are traded through the Kazar. Each year, the Kazar buy seal skins, whalebone, walrus ivory, and dried fish from the Ice People, trading them metal spearheads, pots, fishhooks, beads, cloth, wool, grains, and dried meats. Most of the goods are then sold to the League merchants, who in turn sell them to other tribes throughout the Tamire and in the cities farther south.

THE PURESHK

The least significant tribe of the Tamire is the Pureshk. Closely allied to the Uigan, the Pureshk have little if anything to distinguish themselves from their more powerful protectors. Like the other humans of the steppe, they share the same bloodstock and are even more closely tied to the Uigan than are the Kazar.

As is often the case with minor tribes, the Pureshk have adopted the ways of their powerful neighbors. Thus their dress, habits, beliefs, and lifestyle are, for all practical purposes, identical to those of the Uigan. Even Uigan have difficulty

separating Pureshk from Uigan.

If there is any identifying characteristic of the Pureshk, it is probably the matter of hygiene. Travelers, merchants, and even the Uigan agree that the Pureshk people are among the filthiest and least hygienic people of the Tamire. No experienced traveler stays in the tent of a Pureshk clan unless he enjoys lice and bedbugs. Their meals are often questionable and their habits disgusting. The Uigan joke that the Pureshk can never surprise an enemy because he smells them long before he sees them. They also maintain that as warriors the Pureshk would be worthless if it weren't for their odor, which can cause even the strongest enemy to break and run.

THE PANAK DESERT

North of the Tamire lies a broad expanse of icy wasteland known as the Panak Desert. Although it is not properly a desert, the eerie badlands scoured by bitter winds, gravelly plains dotted with scrub, bleak miles of ice-crusted bog, and, in the far north, ice-covered seas have caused travelers to name it so. To most it is one of the most inhospitable places on earth, yet even here there are people who have chosen to live among the ice and snow.

Seasons on the Panak Desert can be divided into two basic categories—cold and not cold. Although it has four seasons as is normal for most of the world, spring and fall on the Panak are so brief as to be non-existent.

Several months after spring has arrived in the south, the freezing temperatures of the Panak suddenly break. There is a sudden explosion of growth as the hardy grasses, scrub, and moss hastily blossom, brightening up the land with unexpected color. Growth begins immediately and the summer is begun. During the short summer, the plants and animals furiously grow, multiply and gather to survive the coming winter.

Just as suddenly as it began, summer ends as the icy blasts from the north return. Plants suddenly withdraw themselves, animals change color, and the long nights of winter return.

The Panak is a land of extremes. During the height of summer most of the Panak warms to as much as 80 or 90 degrees Fahrenheit during the day, then suddenly drops to near-freezing at night. During the winter, arctic air blasts across the land, bringing with it temperatures as low as -40° F. in the far north. The wind whips the snow raggedly across the open ground to catch and swirl around the smallest obstacles. During winter large open areas remain relatively free of deep snow, but the slightest projections cause great drifts. In the farthest north, the ground never thaws, leaving ice and snow to thicken and increase year round. The long dark nights further compound the chill, leaving the few travelers with the impression of a bleak, dead land.

The Panak is divided into two distinct geographical areas: the Lower Panak, which blends into the grassland of the Tamire, and the Upper Panak, the northernmost part of the Desert. Dividing the two is the Great Escarpment. Thrust up during the Cataclysm, this wall of weath-



ered and broken sandstone juts 100 to 300 feet above the lower plain.

In the centuries since the Cataclysm, the escarpment has eroded and crumbled, spilling down onto the Lower Panak. In winter, huge banks of snow pile against its base and ice expands into the cracks of the sandstone. Because of these conditions, it is a treacherous wall to climb. Talus slopes at the bottom are loose and prone to slides, while the stone of the face is crumbly and porous. The best method of crossing the Great Escarpment is through the occasional gaps in the wall. At the innermost end, the stone changes and height increases as the Great Escarpment rises into the Ring Mountains.

The plain of the Lower Panak is dotted with low hills of sandstone, weirdly eroded to form ominous badlands. Eons of wind have flattened the tops of these while carving out the sides to make cliff-sided mesas and table-top buttes. Flash floods have carved canyons and hollowed small caves in the soft rock. The intermittent streams flood out into the plains, forming cold sand bogs and broad pans of water.

Above the escarpment on the Upper Panak, the ground gradually slopes away to the ocean. The few streams run away from the south to pool into the marshy tundra of the far north. A layer of permafrost exists, coming closer and closer to the surface the farther north one goes. At the northernmost edge, the ground is solid frost year round, and the shore disappears into blinding white expanses of pack ice.

Plant life is sparse and low-growing throughout the Panak. In the south it is dominated by tough, woody-branched evergreen scrub. Where there is sufficient water these bushes form a thick mat over the ground. In their shelter are tender mosses and short grasses. Tiny flowers brighten the landscape, tucked away in the warming beds of moss. Farther north, the scrub gives way to arctic moss and tiny ground-berries. Even these barely cling to life in the harsh conditions. Finally, all plant life fades away till there is nothing but ice, snow, and rock left.

The animals that live in the Panak are as hardy as the plants. Along the southern boundaries, in the lands of the Kazar, are bactrian camels and tough ponies, both able to forage on the tough shrubs and withstand the winter cold. Living alongside them are the ubiquitous mouse, rabbit, deer, fox, and winter wolf. Moose are found in the marshy areas (especially along the Ring Mountains). The steppe tiger can be found as far north as the Great Escarpment.

North of the escarpment, different animals reign. By far the most common are the nasif, a type of reindeer, husbanded by the Ice People. Somewhat less common are the shaggy musk oxen. Here also one finds the mice, rabbits, and wolves that seem to populate all the world. Mostly farther to the north are the fearsome polar bears and, even more dangerous, the remorhaz and ice bears that dwell on the icy slopes of the Ring Mountains. The rarest and most fearsome of all polar creatures are the white dragons. These normally live in the Ring Mountains, but sometimes, when disturbed, they stretch their wings and satisfy their appetites by hunting over the plains of the Panak.

THE ICE PEOPLE

Even in the frozen lands of the Upper Panak there are humans. These humans consist of a number of different tribes known by the collective name of Ice People. Although not organized into tribes or even clans, the Ice People consider themselves to all be one people, united against the hostile conditions of their world. As such, the Ice People are not particularly warlike or hostile. They have few natural enemies and none who are organized enough to present a serious threat.

The Ice People are tall, broadly built, usually with a thick layer of fat over their bodies. Their faces are small and flattened with tiny eyes protected in part by a thick brow. The nose has a distinctive pug shape and the mouth is broad. The ears are small with virtually no lobes. Hair and beards are coarse black. Beards are kept short while hair is normally tied back in a ponytail and liberally greased with whale oil.

The type of clothing used is much more a matter of practicality than style. Men, women, and children tend to dress alike. Clothing is made almost entirely from pelts and hides. The basic dress is an undershirt and leggings of woven nasif wool, simple baggy pants of seal skin, and a loose-fitting tunic of seal or wolf. In colder weather (by their standards) this is supplemented by a knee-length hooded fur cassock, fur boots, nasif-wool gloves, and walrus-hide mittens.

Since the tribes are not warlike, there is no special battle dress. The favored weapons are spears thrown using a spear-thrower, slings, axes, and compound short bows of whalebone.

The Ice People are semi-nomadic. During the short, warm summer season, they travel south to the permanent *ho-tii,* or peat houses, they have built on the pastures of the Upper Panak. Each house is built from bricks of stacked peat and rock carefully pressed together. The roofs are woven branches of evergreen shrubs covered with more peat. The floors are normally dug out slightly below the level of the surrounding ground. Oiled seal skins are used to keep water and wind out. Those tribes that live near the Ring Mountains where trees are more plentiful build cabins of wood and stone. The ho-tii remain from year to year with improvements and repairs made as needed or desired.

In the winter, the coastal families move farther north into the cold regions. There they hunt on the ice packs for seal, walrus, whale, and bear. They move their homes as needed, first setting up seal-skin tents and then packing the outside with snow or cut snow blocks. More skins are laid on the floor to keep the ice from chilling the occupants. Tribes that live farther inland drive their herds of nasif into the sheltered valleys of the Ring Mountains to winter ho-tii that await them.

To get about, the Ice People have developed several unique forms of transportation. When moving their camps across land or pack ice, they make use of nasif-drawn sledges. One or two of these powerful reindeer are hitched to a large sledge,

which is built from a wicker frame with leather thongs and whalebone runners.

When the snow is deep, the people use snowshoes to get about easily. (The Kazar learned the art of snowshoeing from the Ice People.)

Those tribes living along the coast build canoes from oiled seal skins. From these they are able to hunt seals along the ice packs, fish in the open floes, and even harpoon whales on the open water—although this last takes the combined effort of several men. They also collect and carve ivory for trade.

The Ice People are skilled hunters and fishermen. Not surprisingly, they have no talent for growing plants. They are expert at preparing seal skins and are relatively accomplished in tanning other leathers. Those on the coast are skilled in the handling of small boats. In all of Taladas, there are none better at surviving the bitter cold temperatures of the north.

The Ice People seldom see strangers. Those they have met universally report them to be a friendly and trusting people. They unhesitatingly welcome travelers into their homes to feast and entertain. The contents of such a feast vary according to season. In the summertime, it includes meats, berries, young shoots, fish, and nasif milk. In wintertime, the meal is more spartan—fish, seal, whale blubber, stewed mosses, and dried meats. Delicacies include bear liver, salmon roe, and fresh fruits. After a feast, the Ice People stay up far into the night telling stories and jokes. They are noted for their good sense of humor and their willingness to laugh even at their own misfortunes.

Hunting and the nasif are the two foundations of the Ice Peoples' lives, thus their most important ceremonies revolve around these. In their beliefs, every event, every instance of good or bad luck, is caused by some action (or failure to act) among the Ice People. Thus, if disease strikes a herd, it may be due to an improper offering made before the last butchering or because a herdsman washed his hair. Complicated taboos abound within their society.

When the Flight of the Gods left their shamans without power, the Ice People were thrown into a panic. By their beliefs, someone had committed some great wrong. The tribes went through great persecution and agony trying to find the cause. Unable to find a reason, the people finally decided that the evil had been committed by the shamans. They saw that the people themselves had not suffered greatly (except for the loss of the shamans' spells) and that the *makou* (wizards) had not suffered at all. To their reasoning, since the shamans were at fault, they had to be killed or driven out before the entire tribe was blamed. Thus, in the short space of a few years, the Ice People destroyed their entire priesthood. The makou then stepped in to fill the role.

Thus it is that today the wizards serve as the guides and advisors for the Ice People communities. They have taken on many of the public ceremonies the shamans once performed. Much of their magical ability has been cloaked in mystical mumbo-jumbo to the point where even they believe some of it is necessary. Thus spells usually have more components and steps than are necessary and creating magical items includes offerings and prayers that other wizards would find pointless.

The makou have assumed important roles in their tribes; sometimes as leaders, other times as trusted and vital advisors. To distinguish themselves from others, they often wear special headdresses made from animal skulls and pelts. Common to those along the ocean are cowls made from a walrus head, while wolf and bear skull pieces are worn by those more inland.

Even though the gods have since returned, shamans have yet to reappear among the Ice People. The now-traditional prohibition against them has just been too strong to overcome. Still, some gods have managed to inspire select individuals and instill in them the faith and powers of their cult. For example, there are priests of Mislaxa, but they have found it necessary to pose as makou in order to perform their healing arts.

Though not greatly threatened and not very warlike, the Ice People do have enemies. There are the occasional clashes with the Kazar, although these are normally quite brief and often bloodless affairs. More dangerous are the thanoi or walrus men. So rarely are these creatures encountered that most Ice People know them only through stories told at night in the ho-tii.

The thanoi are very real, however. According to legend, they come from somewhere beyond the farthest polar ice. When they do appear, it is always to raid and kill. Their attacks are always savage and are beaten back with the greatest of difficulty. Many a small tribe has been totally exterminated by the walrus men.

THE RING MOUNTAINS

Beyond the Ilquar ranges, the Tamire gradually rises as one goes farther inland until the gently rolling ground gives way to broken foothills and finally the jagged peaks of the Ring Mountains. A series of ranges, the Ring Mountains are a combination of old and new peaks, some formed over the centuries, *others thrust upward in the weeks after the Cataclysm. The ground is alternately old and new, wooded and loamy slopes mixed with the thin, sandy soils of lava flows.

Warmed and watered by the winds blowing off the Tamire, the lower western slopes of the southern end of the Ring Mountains are temperate and lush. Thi spring arrives quickly and lasts long, warming the ground and gradually fading into summer. Summertime is warm but not hot, the temperatures moderated by the cooling breezes from the snow-capped mountain tops. Fall is rainy and gray and the winter chill descends quickly. The winters are marked by heavy snowfall and cold, though the temperature seldom drops to extreme lows.

On the higher slopes, the air is thin and chill, even on the sunniest days of summer. The snows last well into summer in the shaded nooks and crannies of forests. In the heart of the range, the peaks are snow-capped year round with small glaciers waxing and waning from year to year.

Farther to the north, the character of the

mountains changes. Arctic air sweeps over the Panak Desert off the Guurlamskas Ocean and rushes over the slopes. Summers are brief, marked by furious growth. The dry desert winds drop what little rain they have, first snow, then turning to slush, and finally cold gray rain throughout the summer. Even the lower peaks are capped year round by snow and glaciers fill the valleys, slowly advancing through the range. In the northernmost part of the range, the glaciers pour out onto the level plain of the desert.

As noted earlier, the mountains are a combination of old and new. The oldest parts of the range are low and rounded, tapering almost imperceptibly into the foothills bordering the Tamire. Deeper in, the ranges have split along concentric faults that radiate outward from Hitehkel. The earth has tipped along these faults, thrusting up mountain ridges. Quite new, these are extremely high and jagged.

These same faults split open huge lava flows. The seething magma poured into the remains of the Indanalis Sea, boiling away the water in a tremendous explosion of steam. The sudden cooling glassified the lava's surface, creating the bizarre, brilliantly smooth fields of the Shining Plains. Bordering on these strange lands are upthrust cones of basalt surrounded by dunes of black sand, each grain a razor-sharp splinter. This sand blows across the land, polishing the already smooth plain to create a vast sheet of glass. It also cuts and abrades, and the fierce black sandstorms will flay the skin and strip flesh from the bone in a matter of minutes.

When the plain was formed, the cooling lava flowed and formed tubes and caves underneath the ground. Thus much of the plain is honeycombed with underground tunnels and caverns that run for miles. In places these break the surface, in other areas the glassified plain covers them like a thin sheet of ice. The tunnels are substantial enough to form an entire world beneath the surface.

Dotted throughout the Ring Mountains are many still-active volcanoes and geothermal areas. The latter have geysers, mud-pots, hot springs, and fumaroles. They are treacherous areas to cross, boiling pools covered by thin layers of deceptively solid-seeming earth. Because of their warm and soothing waters and their overall unusual terrain, these places are considered sacred and special by the surface dwellers.

On the inward arc of the Ring Mountains, the sloping peaks give way to jutting columns of stone. Formed when large masses of basalt were slowly thrust from below by tremendous pressure, the stone hardened into crystal columns. Roughly hexagonal in shape, most are weathered and cracked across their tops, although a few are smooth and level. Some columns are small, no taller than ten or 20 feet; others are gigantic, towering over 1,000 feet in the air. The largest are supported all around by smaller columns bracing and buttressing them. The columns lean and tilt at all angles, some quite perilously while others stand straight and true. Narrow canyons and crevasses, their floors strewn with rubble, separate the columns. Secret trails exist between each, but there are many dead ends and cul-de-sacs.

The creatures that live in the Ring Mountains vary according to the terrain. The lower slopes of the southern mountains are rich with deer, fox, wolf, rabbit, owl, hawk, boar, bobcat, cougar, and bear. There are colonies of giant ants, great flocks of bats, giant beetles, and lone ankhegs. Farther up the peaks are mountain goats, marmots, and eagles.

There are rumors of a race of half-animal, half-humanoid people, the *saqualaminoi* (white-furred people) of dwarven legend, hidden away in the coldest and most isolated ranges. Farther north, these rumors grow stronger, as do reports of the fearsome remorhaz and cave bear. Across the outer ranges, even stranger creatures dwell on the Shining Plains—the horax and skrit, great insectoid beasts able to survive through all but the most fearsome of the black sandstorms.

Before the Cataclysm, the Ring Mountains (or what existed of them then) had stood on the edge of the burgeoning Empire of Aurim. With the devastation of Hiteh's Night, the Empire was destroyed and its people scattered. Yet there remains evidence of its former greatness. Here and there throughout the Ring Mountains are ruins and traces of Aurim's might. Some have been long-lost; others are revered as sacred or shunned as taboo. Best known of all these is the Pillar at Malad-Thoor, at the edge of the Dwarven Caverns.

The Pillar is a towering monument of carved white marble, almost 1,500 feet high. Once it stood much taller, but as much as one-third to one-half of the upper part has cracked and broken away, scattered in gigantic stone shards over the surrounding region. Carved bands of glyphs encircle the Pillar (which is over 200 feet in diameter) at vertical intervals of 50 feet. The Pillar is built in a series of steps, with the column's diameter lessening every 500 feet.

While it is known that the Pillar was built during the time of the Empire of Aurim, the exact reason for its construction is unknown. It is commonly believed to be an emperor's tomb, although local legend describes it as the spear of Qu'uan the Warrior cast to earth during the All-Saints War. Naturally, there is rumored to be a great treasure hidden in or around the Pillar. Adventurers and grave robbers have scoured the area in vain.

For all their volcanic convulsions and horrible contortions, the Ring Mountains are inhabited, in some areas heavily populated. Those dwelling in the mountains are divided between the surface and underground. On the surface are the ogres, humans, and small groups of gnomoi. Underground, so deeply hidden that they are almost forgotten by the surface, are the dwarves.

The ogres, or First People as they call themselves, live mainly in the woodlands of the western valleys. They dominate this region, defending the land from the occasional attacks of the elves (who generally find it much easier to attack the goblins in the Ilquar ranges). During extremely cold winters, the saqualaminoi may come down out to wreak havoc among the ogres.

The frosty highlands are the strange and mysterious stronghold of the saqualaminoi. Little is known of the white-haired men, for they dwell in a land few reach. Even should a traveler have the desire, he would first have to traverse the homeland of the ogres —a race not noted for their hospitality. Approach from the other side would be no easier—skirting the edge of Hitehkel, crossing the Shining Plain, and finally scaling the upthrusts of the mountains themselves. Once there, he would have to survive in a frozen land where even the Ice People of the Panak would find their skills put to a sore test. Little wonder that no traveler has gone to the trouble.

Barely better known are the nomads of the Shining Lands. Even in this deadly and inhospitable land, humans have fought to make a home. The nomads are a bizarre and mysterious group, withdrawn to themselves, with customs shaped by the unforgiving demands of the land they dwell in. Their enemies include not just the voracious horax and skrit but also the most implacable foe—the tearing black sand of the Plain.

In a small way, their hardships have been lessened by the gnomes to the east of them. The gnomoi who dwell among the land of columns are their principal trading partners. In exchange for minerals and other goods, the gnomoi provide the nomads with sandsuits and useful devices to make their lives both possible and safer. These gnomoi, a branch of the more numerous and powerful gnomoi of Hitehkel, live among the twisted paths of the columns. There they live like their cousins, designing, testing, fabricating, and redesigning. They make some trade with the nomads, other gnomoi, and those brave merchants of the League and old Aurim who reach them, but their most important trading partners are the Scorned, the deep-dwelling dwarves under the Ring Mountains.

The Scorned, as they call themselves, are an ancient race of dwarves. Once, before the Cataclysm, they lived near the surface and were commonly seen throughout the surface lands. Since Hiteh's Night, the dwarves have retreated farther and farther underground, until now when they rarely, if ever, venture into the sunlit world. It is not uncommon for a dwarf of this empire to never leave the enclosed world of the underground tunnels.

Far underground, the dwarves discovered something or someone else, the *duramkinarchsa* or "beasts of the stone." Living even deeper than the Scorned Dwarves, the stone beasts have never been seen on the surface (at least in recent times) and are only known through the stories of the dwarves and the legends of miners. While such tales normally portray them as monsters, it is quite possible they are an organized people barely beyond the stages of savagery. Tales and legends give them a horrid and fanciful appearance, but the common thread is that they are stooped and squat, barely able to stand erect, and that their skins are heavily crusted and stiff. Sometimes they are described with fangs or horns or both; other times the description is mixed with that of other creatures—apes, oxen, even elephants.

THE FIRST PEOPLE

Living in the western woodlands of the Ring Mountains are the Abaqua ogres (Abaqua means "First People" in their tongue). These brutes are a simple race, organized into a loose nation. Although hardly pacifists, their needs and wants are relatively minor and so they stay to their own lands for the most part.

Ogres are classed by humans as part of the giant races. They stand eight to ten feet tall, although they are normally stooped, which somewhat lessens the impact of their full height. Both males and females have broad shoulders and barrel-like chests. They stand bent-kneed, giving the impression they are bow-legged. Their skin color ranges from swarthy brown to a purplish-black. Their bodies are covered in large knobby warts, something others might find unpleasant but which they consider to be a sign of beauty. Their hair is black and stringy, normally cropped short all around to keep down lice and other vermin. Males and females dress simply. The most common material is buck- and doeskin. Males wear simple heavy leather trousers and shirts. These are trimmed with fringe and bone—often the prize kills of the ogre. Females wear long dresses of doeskin, decorated with appliques of dyed leather patches. During the summer, they go about barefoot. In winter they add bearskin robes and fur-lined boots for extra warmth. In general, they need to wear less for protection than others, being far hardier than other races.

By custom, only ogre males are allowed to carry weapons (although knives and daggers are worn by all). An ogre's normal complement of arms includes a stone-tipped war club, a fire-hardened spear, several smaller throwing clubs, throwing stones (chosen for weight, balance, and looks), slings and stones, and a metal-bladed dagger. Aside from their leather clothing, the ogres wear no armor, relying on their natural toughness.

Much knowledge has been lost since the Cataclysm, including the secrets of the origins of the ogres. Today, popular tales and superstitions fill the void. The elves of the Tamire believe the ogres are as they have been since the beginning of time—that they were created in these forms and shall remain so for all time. Scholars of the League argue endlessly about the matter (as is their wont). Some maintain the ogres are a crossbreed of human and saqualaminoi; others react to this idea as sick blasphemy, suggesting that the combination is more likely between the dwarves and the saqualaminoi. (The dwarves have never heard this idea.) The Scorned Dwarves believe the ogres are the result of Reorx's rage against the humans when they failed to learn his teachings. Frustrated by their stubborn minds and slow wit, he cursed them with forms to match. They consequently refer to ogres as human-kin and humans as ogre- kin.

The ogres themselves have the closest answer to the riddle of their origin. According to their tales, they (the ogres) were once the First People of the Earth. When they were created, the gods give them special gifts of virtue and fairness.

They were tall and fair, clever and intelligent. In time there rose among them a tribe that grew evil and corrupt listening to the words of men. This tribe, the Irda, waged great war upon their brethren and finally stole all the gifts the gods had given unto the First People. These they fled with, hiding the gifts away in the secret places of the world. Ever since, the ogres have searched for the stolen gifts, hoping to restore them to their kind. Naturally, they bear a great hatred for the thieving Irda and their allies, the humans.

The true origin of the ogres is close to this, except for several key differences. Yes, they were once fair and wise, but their own powers were corrupted by evil. It is also true that a great war was fought among the ogres, between the Irda and the remainder of the nation, a war virtually unknown to men. However, the Irda, having forseen the inevitable decay of their race under the force of evil, were attempting to halt the slide. In the end the Irda were forced to flee to distant lands for their own safety. Being the victors, more or less, the remaining ogres have conveniently rewritten history to favor themselves.

The ogres view themselves as a single nation formed of related tribes of about 100 members per tribe. Each tribe has its own name, usually chosen from a landmark or place name that is central to the traditional lands of that tribe. Tribes inculde the Black Peak People, the Deerwood People, the Grass People, the Falling River People, and so on. Each tribe is an extended family, with brothers, uncles, children, etc., living within the same group. Although it is accepted that a male can have more than one wife, tradition usually limits him to one. Additional wives are taken most often when a brother dies, leaving a widow who must be cared for. Children are raised by the parents with the assistance of the rest of the tribe. Those too sickly, aged, or wounded to travel with the tribe are killed. Ogre tribes do not have too many elderly members. The tribe, as a whole, forms a supportive group with each member responsible for the health, safety, and protection of all others.

The ogres do not build permanent homes but maintain regular campsites where they spend parts of their year. In the summer the Black Peak tribe can always be found in a clearing on the banks of the Mashk River; in winter they camp at the caves of the Tamaf Cliffs. Other tribes follow a similar pattern. Each tribe has a traditional range that it considers its territory. Although all one nation, entering the land of another tribe is done only at great risk. The tribes take a dim view of others hunting, camping, or sometimes even crossing their territory. Trespassers from friendly tribes (bound by blood relation) are treated as special guests—and the same treatment is expected in return. Trespassers from hostile tribes are killed or driven off. As a necessary ingredient for survival, all ogres are well aware of tribal boundaries and the landmarks that identify them.

Tribal life is very simple. Upon arriving at a new camp, the ogres build dome-like houses of young saplings covered with sheets of bark and leaves. Depending on taste, the floor is left bare or covered with pine boughs. Good hunters show their skill by covering their floors and the area outside the entrance with hides. Most cooking, when food is cooked, is done outdoors well away from the huts. Cooking fires are moved into the flammable huts only during bad weather. They have few iron utensils—some simple pots bought or taken from merchants. Most cups and bowls are made of wood or gourd. Each warrior has a drinking skull fashioned from the bones of a particularly notable enemy. For a young warrior this is normally his first kill; older warriors may have one or several depending on how their foes rate. In battle, the ogre who requests to "drink from his opponent" is giving the highest compliment he knows, ranking his foe as worthy of being his drinking skull.

The ogres are not particular about the quality of their food or dining habits. Wise travelers eat their own meals well away from the fires of ogres. Kills are normally cached in tree branches or buried, the meat used as needed. Spoilage is of no concern to the ogres. Raw, broiled, and stewed meats, supplemented by a few berries and wild herbs, are common fare. Water and blood are the most common drinks.

At the head of the tribe is the warchief. This ogre, the strongest and canniest who has proven himself in battle, leads the warriors in battle, acts as tribal judge, and is responsible for the grouping of the hunt. It is a powerful position and dangerous at the same time. While the warchief gains many benefits, blame for failure in battle or times of starvation are placed directly on him. The ogres do not forgive failure with a simple "I'm sorry. Next time I'll do better." Death is a far more common punishment.

Most activities take place outside around a central fire. It is taboo to cook over this fire, spit into it, or douse it with water. Maintaining the fire is symbolically important to the tribe, arising from practical necessity—the fire-making ability of the ogres is limited, and it is far easier for them to keep one fire going at all times. One elder ogre, too old to fight, has the position of *hoorac* or "firetender." In rank within the tribe it is second only to the warchief. The firetender not only maintains the council fire but acts as the speaker of all councils at the fire. The firetender is chosen on the basis of his fame and wisdom to advise the warchief. Like the warchief, his life is forfeit if the fire goes out or his advice is exceptionally bad. Of course, if he gives bad advice he can always try to blame it on the warchief.

Although the ogres are powerful, brutish and violent, they are not particularly aggressive. For the most part they stay to themselves (just as they have since before the Ogre Wars). However, their violent spirit cannot be quashed and so they eagerly go to war to avenge any raids made on them by outsiders. At times they venture onto the plains to attack the elves, but the horsemen are often too dangerous for them. The saqualaminoi of the high mountains are too difficult and reclusive to make good targets. Their preferred victims are the Scorned living deep underground. The ogres know the entrances into this underground world and the tunnels that lead to the edge of this dwarven empire. Of course the dwarves are not ones to be helplessly raided and retaliate in kind with their own bloody raids.

Although the tribes function independently, there are occasions when the nation can be brought together to act as one. If their lands are threatened with invasion or if a charismatic and successful warchief arises among the tribes, they will act together. While they do not understand the full value of money (they do not use it among themselves), they will occasionally venture beyond their own lands and work as guards or soldiers in distant realms.

THE SAQUALAMINOI

Above the lands of the Abaqua ogres, above the timberline of the Ring Mountains, is a region of jagged rock and glacier fields. Here nothing grows except scrawny lichens and hardy mosses in the warmest sunlit regions at the edge of tree line. Here even that most adaptable creature, man, chooses not to dwell. To him and others, it is a bleak and desolate land of lifeless ice and stone. But it is the home of the saqualaminoi.

The saqualaminoi, or white-haired people, are a race of ogre-like people who dwell in the snowbound peaks of the inner Ring range. They stand seven to nine feet tall (slightly smaller than an ogre). Their bodies are covered with white- to gray-colored hair—a soft, downy layer close to the skin and a longer oily layer covering this. The down traps body heat while the longer bristles shed water, snow, and ice. Their heads are compact and press down between their shoulders, leaving the impression they have no neck. Prominent fangs, small eyes, and an almost flat nose mark their faces. Their ears are hidden under their hair. Both their hands and feet are thickly padded, covered with hair, and taloned to give them purchase on the ice. They can deliver massive blows with their fists and cause horrendous gashes with their claws. The males (bulls) are larger and more aggressive than the females, except in the defense of young.

Although the white-haired ones are intelligent, they are extremely primitive. They do not wear clothing or make anything beyond the simplest of stone implements. They have a language, one without roots to any other spoken on Taladas. They dwell in ice caves and feed on mountain goats and sheep that dwell at the base of their glaciated lands, storing the frozen carcasses in their caves until they are consumed. Curiously, they do not prey on humanoids by choice but are drawn to them by curiosity. They attempt to capture those humanoids they encounter. However, their methods are rough and they kill those who resist. The ogres, in particular, resist quite vigorously, believing the saqualaminoi to be bloodthirsty snow-demons. There are reports of humans who have actually escaped from the captivity of the white-haired men, but these accounts are quite possibly exaggerations or lies.

Living so isolated from all else, the white-haired men do not normally become involved with others. Their most notable contact is in times of poor hunting, particularly during the winter. Then, driven by lack of food, they come down out of the mountains to raid the villages and tribes nearby, again most often the ogres. These raids are usually made under the cover of fierce blizzards that blow down the mountains. The ogres call such snows the "demonstorms." In their legends, the saqualaminoi are not real creatures but evil spirits of the mountains sent to perform their wickedness on the true people of the Abaqua.

More recently, Hiteh the Merchant, god of mischief, has taken an interest in the saqualaminoi. In their primitive state, they stand at the threshold of good and evil. He, for one, is working to tip the balance to evil. Through his powers, he has inspired a powerful bull of that race with ambition—cruel and brutal ambition. This bull now works to dominate and lead the others, making them more warlike and aggressive. As is the way with evil, Hiteh has taught the bull, named He-of-the-Great-Ice-Cleft, that taking is easier and more successful than work. He-of-the-Great-Ice-Cleft has led others of his people on longer and more intentional raids than before. Their victories, bringing back meat and new luxuries like metal-bladed weapons, have increased Hiteh's influence over the whole tribe.

THE GLASS-SAILORS

Of all the humans who survived the Cataclysm, none have adapted more thoroughly to the bizarre circumstances of their environment than the nomadic Glass Sailors of the Shining Lands. Cut off from contact with their fellows and thrust into a deadly wasteland of flesh-tearing sandstorms, deceptive glass traps, blinding sun, shimmering mirages, and deadly foes, the Glass Sailors have not only found a way to survive but even multiply. In doing so, however, they have adopted a harsh and unforgiving outlook on life.

The Glass Sailors are a tall and slender people, descendants of the people of ancient Aurim. The average height for men is six feet; women stand slightly less than this. Their legs are long while their torsos are average in length. They have exceptionally long arms, reaching almost to their knees. Facially, the typical Sailor has prominent cheekbones and sunken cheeks. The chin tends to be long and squared and the nose small but sharp. Once, long-ago, they were pale complected, but generations of sun and weathering have given them a deep red-brown skin tone. Their hair is blond to pale-white. They grow it long and braid, bind, and tie it into patterns. Ponytails, braids, buns, and twisted locks are all common.

Most startling are their eyes. The arresting blue of the pupil is accented by the taut folds of skin above and below, narrowing the eye to a simple slit. The eyelashes, though bleached pale, are long and particularly thick, while the eyebrows are almost non-existent, plucked to a fine arc as is their custom. The skin around the eyes is paler than the rest of the face, a result of the sand goggles they almost constantly wear when on the surface.

The dress of the Glass Sailors is divided between underground and surface costumes. The dangerous conditions found on the topside demand special garb to protect from the razor-like sand. Even underground, special effort is taken to keep the black sand away. Because of this need, clothing for men and women tends to follow the same pattern.

The underground costume has three main parts: the pantaloons, the shirt, and cowl. Both the pants and the shirt are of a tightly woven cotton, grown around the oases of the Shining Land. Points of frequent wear— knees, elbows, and the seat—are reinforced with thick leather pads stitched to the outside of the cloth. The shirt and pants are loose and billowy to reduce chafing by what sand does get inside. The shirt is double-breasted, the two sides overlapping. The inner layer is fastened by a set of ties. The outer layer has large brass toggles. When relaxing in safe conditions, the toggles are normally left unfastened, allowing the shirt to drape open somewhat. The cloth at the wrists, neck, ankles, and waist is gathered into tight cuffs. These are further sealed by overlapping thongs and sashes, often brightly colored and decorated. The third part of the costume is the cowl. This is part tight-fitting hood, part flowing cape. It fits snugly over the head, sealing tightly around the face. From this it hangs loosely down the back and shoulders reaching to the mid-thigh, splitting into two tails. Ties can be used to fasten it to the sleeves and the tails can be wrapped around the waist for. additional protection. When well away from tunnel entrances, the cowl is normally worn off the head, only pulled up when stray breezes blow the sand about. Tight-fitting socks with thick leather soles are always worn, the tops reaching to the end of the pants. Finally, small nose filters (carried on a thong around the neck) complete the outfit. The entire costume is customarily black or dark grey to blend in with the tunnels.

On the surface, the underground costume is supplemented by additional protection. When the time on the surface is short and the conditions are not dangerous, no special protections are worn. In other situations, the full surface suit is worn. The most important features are the filtermask and sand goggles. The mask is made of molded leather. It fits over the mouth, nose, cheeks, and chin. Built into it is a filtering screen to block the blowing sand and a simple megaphone to keep the voice from being muffled. The leather is often molded and painted into fanciful animal faces. The entire mask laces onto the edge of the cowl. The sand goggles have lenses of glass (cut from the Shining Land) set into leather cups that flare to overlap the mask and cowl. These may be plain or elaborately carved to match the mask.

To complete the surface outfit, each traveler has a leather overcape and gauntlets. The cape is carried but, since it is hot and doesn't breathe well, is only worn during the black sandstorms that sweep the plain. Then the tribesmen draw the cloak tightly about themselves and huddle down behind protection as best they can. The gauntlets are also of heavy leather and are worn as needed.

The Glass Sailors are not warlike in the sense that they go out and attack each other or any neighboring tribes (the gnomes are their only neighbors of significance). However, they are constantly threatened by colonies of horax and attacks of lone skrit and so have developed their fighting skills to a fine art. Battle armor consists of a breastplate and half-cuisse (leg armor that protects the front of the thigh) made from the carapace of the horax. Their favored weapons are metal-bladed swords, clubs set with razor sharp pieces of black glass, glass darts, and slings.

Because the Shining Land has few resources to support people, the Glass Sailors are few in number and live in small groups. There are approximately 10,000 of these nomads all told, although no census has ever been taken (for obvious reasons). Each group tends to be about 25 individuals, all related by blood. Thus there are about 400 different families sailing the Shining Land.

Although they are truly independent of each other, the families nominally recognize a monarchy within the people. This monarchy traces its descent to a royal prince of pre-Cataclysm Aurim and is now concentrated into a few select families. The monarchial privileges are matters of courtesy only. They have no ability to influence the actions of others except by the prestige of their name. This prestige does allow them to maintain a certain amount of importance through the barter of sons and daughters for marriage.

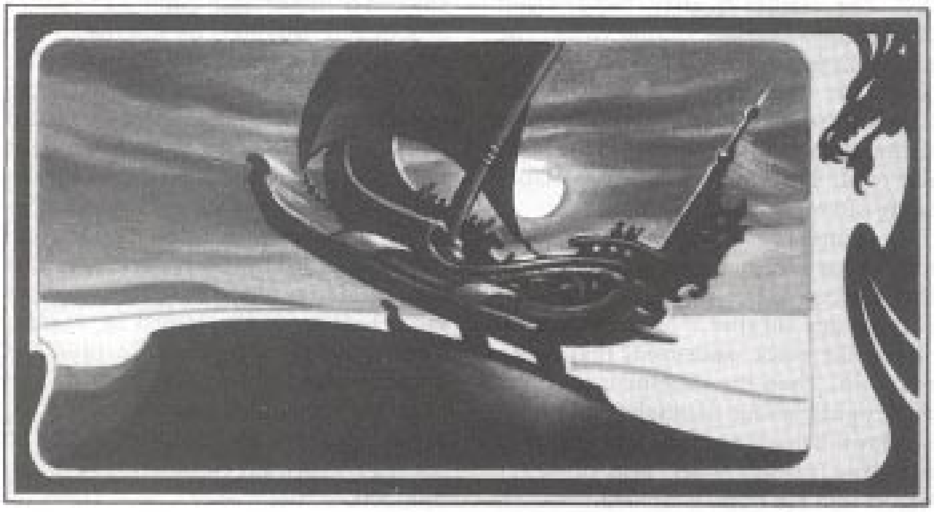
Unlike many other peoples of Taladas, the Glass Sailors tend to treat men and women equally. Unmarried women and men are both expected to work and fight for the survival of the family, thus women are equal warriors to the men. Within the family there are a few roles that are traditionally defined by sex. Navigation of the glass skimmers is taught to men; ancient songs and stories are learned by women. The seemingly enlightened attitude of equality changes with marriage. At this point the women bear and raise children, a role considered even more important by the tribe, especially considering their low numbers.

The families live nomadic lives, shifting with the seasonal movements of the horax and the production of the oases. While there are many watering points (including flowing rivers) throughout the Shining Land, most do not provide the shelter needed for long stays. These sites are used as stopping points on the longer journeys to the oases. What makes these oases special are the lava caves nearby. These caves provide shelter for the Glass Sailors.

Each family group occupies a single cave and it is normal for several caves to be found around a single oasis. Just as other nomads have traditional hunting grounds, the families of the Glass Sailors each have particular caves. Battles sometimes erupt when squatters attempt to occupy the cave of a particular family. The cave is important as the living quarters, emergency shelter, and storage for the family. Most activities, such as cooking, are still conducted outdoors in the oasis itself.

Upon claiming a cave, the family first erects the door seal which can best be imagined as a primitive airlock. Outermost is a wicker frame of stretched leather that covers the cave mouth. This has one small entrance door. Beyond this are several heavy curtains of cloth, each with a slit for passing through set in a different place. In this way, the windblown black sand is blocked or trapped before it reaches the living quarters of the family.

Beyond the seal are the general living quarters of the family. Since lava tunnels



tend to be a single chamber, curtains are hung to separate different sleeping quarters. Each is furnished with hide spreads and woven reed mats. Lighting is provided through magical means, phosphorescent fungi, and occasional candles or fires. The latter are discouraged since they quickly foul the air of the cave.

Of course, the Glass Sailors don't live on the Shining Land just because they think it is a wonderful place—personally, they think it is far from paradise. Driven out of more abundant lands by ogres and the like, the Glass Sailors have learned to exist here. They gather the most polished sections of the land for sale to the gnomes and dwarves who sometimes come up from below. The glass is used as windows, lenses, or even cut into pretty baubles. They also mine small deposits of exotic metals for sale to the gnomes.

To supplement their living, the Glass Sailors hunt the wild gazelles that live along the broken riverbanks, the giant lizards of the hot land, and the fearsome skrit and horax of the tunnels below the surface. They grow cotton around waterholes, planting the seed in one season and returning for the harvest in another. They collect fruit from the thick-barked trees that grow at waterside. In short, they do everything they can to make their lives easier.

The most notable achievement of the Glass Sailors is the one that has given them their name—their unique transportation, the glass skimmers. The glass skimmers are similiar in appearance to iceboats. The skimmer has a hull, one or more sails and outrigger arms ending in special runners. Here the skates are not metal blades, but specially oil-soaked and prepared pads fixed to the bottom of the runners. Each skimmer can carry four to five people and their belongings. Larger skimmers are not practical. Using the skimmers, the Glass Sailors are able to "sail" vast areas of the Shining Land. Only areas drifted with the razor sharp black sand are impassable and these areas are to be avoided anyway for the sand would easily get into clothing to chafe and cut.

Glass sailing is not without its risks. Of course there is the chance of being overturned by a sudden gust—slamming into the hard ground at 30 or 40 miles per hour is not a pleasant thought. More treacherous dangers exist, however. The black sandstorms can catch a skimmer out in the open. Little can be done then but to bring down the sail, anchor the points, and take cover from the cutting sand. Nor is the Shining Land perfectly smooth; there are many areas of jagged shards and collapsed cave roofs. Navigators need to know the lay of the land lest they sail onto the rocks. There are other areas where the lava caves almost break through the surface. Here the Shining Land is nothing more than a thin fragile sheet. The navigators learn to watch for telltale signs, the drumming waver of the glass, the crumbled pitted holes, and the hollow thrumming of the runners. The land is dotted with gaping holes and the ruins of skimmers whose navigators failed to heed these warnings in time.

These tunnels hold an even more fearsome danger, the horax. These insectoid creatures live in great colonies in the tubeways just below the surface. Seasonally they migrate throughout the interconnected tubeways, moving from one part of the plain to another. At night they leave their caves to hunt in packs, swarming over lone skimmers or unprotected camps. They also dig new tunnels, sometimes bursting into the sleeping caves of the Glass Sailors. It is fighting these and the predatory skrit that train the warriors of Glass.

The Glass Sailors were not an organized people prior to the Cataclysm. They formed from the survivors of the wreckage. Because of this, the families did not suffer as much from the upheaval caused by the Flight of the Gods. There was no established set of beliefs that suddenly needed modification when the priests lost their powers. Instead, the beliefs of the Glass People grew out of the events that have occurred since the Cataclysm. This has given them a different view of life from most other groups of Taladas.

The Glass Sailors have become convinced that the land of Taladas (as they remember it) is being punished and tested by the gods. In their tales, told by the female bards, the gods have become angry with the evil of their children and are now testing them. Those fit to survive and endure the tests shall be taken by the gods into the realm of paradise, the realm of the High Father. The Shining Land is the test of their people. If they can survive and prosper in this land, they will prove themselves worthy. If they fail, including leaving the plain for more hospitable terrain, they will have failed in their test and will never be able to enter the paradise of the gods.

To this end, the wizards and wizardesses of the tribe have assumed the roles of seers and prophets. They tend to specialize in divination and invocation. It is

their duty to aid and guide the families through the trials set by the gods. They advise the family and lead it in battle against all enemies. Thus, the wizards are found at the forefront of any fight, not necessarily in actual melee but standing prominently where all can see them.

Because all that has happened since the Cataclysm is a test, to turn away from the challenge is to fail. Those who fail do not reach paradise. This makes the Glass Sailors fanatically brave. They will not surrender and almost never flee. They will not shirk a task or avoid a responsibility. Unlike other fanatics, the Glass Sailors view the test as personal to their people. There is no need to spread their view to others. The test is their test alone. Others only exist to pose challenges. They can never be part of the Glass Sailors' test.

Their belief that they are being tested on the Shining Land has led the Glass Sailors to believe that leaving the land is evil. On those occasions when they carry goods to the gnomes, all those who take part in the caravan must be specially purified when they return. The purification ceremony, conducted by the family wizard, is harsh and painful, involving ritual burial up to the neck in the sharp-edged black sand. By suffering through this ceremony, the traders drive the evil that has entered them out of their bodies.

This same belief is used to set punishments for crimes. While most crimes are dealt with by servitude or payment of a fine (in goods), the worst crimes—patricide in particular—are punished by branding and banishment from the land. The expelled criminal has essentially lost all hope of entering paradise. Of course, the banished still believe they are being tested and thus still have a chance for the reward of the gods. Many of the Glass Sailors encountered beyond the land view every event as a test or challenge to their beliefs.

THE GNOMOI OF THE COLUMNS

Living in the land of the basalt columns are the *Bilogastandirachgnomius,* a branch of the gnomes. Separated from the main line of the gnomes by the convulsions of Hiteh's Night, the Bilo (for short) have settled in the region that forms the border between the Shining Land and Hitehkel. Here they practice their gnomish arts, making devices and living in quiet peace.

The Bilo gnomes are similar in appearance to the gnomes of Hitehkel. They stand about three to three-and-a-half feet tall and are hefty framed little fellows. Like all of their kind they have large noses and high, domed foreheads. Their skin has a ruddy, waxy complexion. Males normally wear their hair long and scraggly—personal appearance is not particularly important, although they are not slovenly. Females pride themselves on their prim and proper look. Bathing is a common and important practice, unusual among the peoples of Taladas. So particular are they about hygiene that visitors are usually bathed before any audience. This is presented as a special honor, what with the attention lavished by the gnomish servants, but outsiders tend to view the whole thing as a necessary ordeal, especially since the gnomes apply the soap and brush with great vigor.

The Bilo gnomes dress simply. Men wear knee-length tunics, patterned with vertical stripes or divided into two colors (one half blue and the other yellow, for example). Brightly colored hose, soft shoes, and a leather belt finish the costume. In bad weather a hooded cloak, perhaps trimmed with fur, is added to this basic garb. Women wear floor-length gowns with wide sleeves and a short mantle. Young women usually bind their hair in long braids and wear a golden or silver circlet. Upon marriage, a wife usually dresses in more somber colors as befits her important station.

The Bilo gnomes have no standing army, but everyone, male and female alike, is expected to serve in the militia if it is called up. The actual rank and task depends on the age and abilities of the gnome. Men capable of wielding a sword form the bulk of the militia, serving as common soldiers. Common soldiers have a chain mail hauberk, helmet, spear, and short sword. Each man is expected to have his own equipment ready for use at any time. The sergeants and captains are normally older, more experienced men who have proven themselves leaders of the community. Unfortunately this does not always translate to military skill. Young women without children form the auxillaries—companies of slingers and bowmen with simple leather or padded armor. They avoid contact with the enemy if at all possible. Mothers, the aged, and children serve as cooks, water bearers, wound dressers, and runners, handling all the non-combat tasks that must be dealt with. Thus, although the gnomes of Bilo are few in number (no more than 10,000 total), they can mobilize themselves to present a formidable defense, especially when combined with the fortifications of their towers.

The Bilo gnomes are united into a single nation, composed of the ten different towns that form their land. The Ten Towns are ruled by the Council of Burghers, the mayor of each town having a seat at the Council. From their numbers the Burghers elect a Burgomeister, Grand Imperator, and a Warden of the Eastern March.

The Burgomeister is the head of the Council and presides over all the affairs of the gnomes. The Grand Imperator is a war leader. During peacetime the Imperator has no powers or duties and is often not even consulted on military matters. However, in the event of attack, he assumes complete control of the gnome militia and is the sole authority for the course of the war. During this time the Burghers act as councillors. The Warden of the Eastern Marches, originally charged with the protection of the easternmost towers, is responsible for the security of the gnomes in times of peace. It is his duty to protect the gnomes from raids, gather intelligence, and quell disorder as quickly as possible. Should a war occur, he becomes the second-in-command, taking his orders from the Grand Imperator. These three terms are for life.

Each mayor is elected by the citizens of his town. Citizenship is limited strictly to gnomes who are eligible to or have served in the militia. The votes of those bound in service to another (an apprentice, ser-

vant, or sharecropper, for example) are held by the master. Thus, guildmasters and large landowners control a larger portion of votes than normal craftsmen. The mayor retains his position until challenged; there is no set term of service. He can be challenged by any citizen at any time, but such challenges are normally only made when the challenger feels he has a decent shot at victory.

Below the mayor of a town is the town council. These vary in size from town to town. The aldermen are nominated by the mayor and approved by the citizens. An alderman's term of service is dependent on the mayor; an alderman can be replaced provided the citizens approve a new nominee. Clearly the system promotes cronyism and block voting; however, the gnomes are independent minded enough to make the system work fairly well.

The Bilo gnomes dwell not just among the basalt columns, but also within them. The ten communities are scattered throughout the land of columns, each approximately 1,000 strong. Each town is organized around a central pillar, a huge basalt tower that rises above the surrounding terrain. This tower is honeycombed with tunnels, chambers, granaries, armories, council rooms, barracks, and quarters. As a rule, however, the gnomes do not dwell here. Instead they live in small homes of the town built in the shadow of the tower. The whole thing is then surrounded by an outer wall of defense.

The gnomes have had many enemies in the past—goblins, ogres, hobgoblins, and elves. Although their enemies are now few, they must still contend with formidable threats from the creatures rising out of Hitehkel and hobgoblin raiding parties from old Aurim. Should the outer wall of defense fail, the gnomes retreat to their tower, there to outwait the besiegers.

Of course, the gnomes have not always proved victorious. Several towns have fallen in the past, particularly to the armies of the fire beings of Hitehkel. Most of these are reclaimed and resettled since the attackers come only to pillage and destroy, not conquer territory. Two towns are notable exceptions to this. One is *Provoerhoosktalchder,* the "Warden's Tower," and the other is *Ilmachtothtalchder,* the "Tower of Ghosts."

Provoerhoosktalchder is called the Warden's Tower because of its location. It was the easternmost of all the Bilo towns, the first line of defense against the hobgoblins of Aurim. Governorship of the town was always assigned to the Warden of the Eastern March, the second-in-command of the Bilo militia forces. However, 53 years ago, the hobgoblins, aided by the fire minions of Hitehkel, stormed the tower and claimed control of it. Although the invasion was later defeated (with the aid of the Scorned Dwarves), the hobgoblins have managed to retain control of the Warden's Tower.

Today the situation is a standoff. Within the tower are about 1,500 hobgoblins of all ages. Ringing it outside, under the permanent command of the Warden of the Eastern March, are 1,000 gnome militia. Every season each tower must provide 100 men to this duty. The gnomes know they have insufficient numbers to storm the tower—after all they built it and know what its defenses are like. At the same time, the hobgoblins lack the overwhelming superiority necessary to encourage them to attack the gnomes. Both sides are given to raids and small skirmishes, each waiting for an opportunity to appear.

The town and wall at the base of the tower were destroyed during the battle and have never been rebuilt. Indeed, in the years since, the rubble and waste outside the tower has actually increased. The gnomes attribute this to the filthiness of the hobgoblins. While this is true in part, most of the debris is the result of tunneling being done by the hobgoblins. Occasionally gnome sappers detect this tunneling and manage to dig a countermine, leading to fierce underground battles. They have never been able to achieve more than a standoff against the hobgoblins, however. So the situation now stands.

The second tower, the Ilmachtothtalchder, is not occupied by anyone. When the evil dragons were released onto Krynn and flew over Taladas, two of them, Masud the Hateful and her mate, chose this gnomish tower as their home. The gnomes, filled from childhood with tales, lies, and half-truths about dragons, simply could not withstand their might. Some fled, panicked at the mere thought of dragons. Others, remembering the tales of lone heroes bravely besting the fearsome reptiles, foolishly marched forward on their own only to be destroyed before the eyes of the others.

The dragons ravaged the town. The fortunate gnomes fled to other towers; the foolish fled into their tower for safety. These the dragons toyed with for sport, sometimes allowing them moments of hope only to then reappear with horrible fearsomeness. Through magic the gnomes broadcast their pleas of help to the others, but no aid could reach them. In the end none escaped.

Since that time the tower has remained deserted and the land around it is shunned. Occasionally the farmlands of neighboring towns are raided, but there is little the gnomes have been able to do to date. Every few years the Warden sends a party to scout the tower. The fortunate return with grim news and nightmares. The dragons remain and their numbers seem to be increasing say the scouts. Masud has raised a brood of hatchlings who are now entering the early ages of maturity. Her old mate died some time ago. Soon she will leave the tower to find a new mate. Together they will return and she will breed again. Meanwhile her children will be sent out to manage on their own.

Gnomish Society

Gnomish society is divided into two main classes. Largest among the Bilo and most influential (because they are more competent) are the gnomoi—the True Gnomes of Reorx. These gnomes are the leaders of the community, the supervisors, the captains, the engineers, and the guildmasters. As True Gnomes they have the knowledge and ability to build and construct successfully.

Working under gnomoi guidance are those of the second class, the minoi or Cursed Gnomes. These fellows, although they try sincerely, cannot build and craft successfully. True, they have the necessary

skills, but they lack the insight needed to design and construct items. It is only under the careful supervision of the gnomoi that they have proven useful. They are laborers, workers at the forge, assistants to the master craftsmen, shepherds, and ploughmen.

Although the gnomoi watch over the minoi carefully and block them from the powerful positions in the society (truly for the good of the community), the gnomoi love their kin no less. At worst their feelings toward the minoi can be described as paternalistic. At best, they hope to improve the abilities and minds of their less fortunate cousins. The minoi, for the most part, find no fault with the arrangement so long as they are able to occasionally indulge their whims for construction.

The gnomes of Bilo, unlike their Hitehkel brothers, do not have easy access to rich mineral deposits. Thus they have turned instead to the fabrication of small and intricate devices. Most of these devices they keep jealously to themselves, but a few they make specifically for trade. Most desirable of all these are the compact timepieces they make in elaborately designed and decorated cases. These are capable of telling the time to within a quarter of an hour. However, not satisfied with this, the gnomes also load them with clockwork mechanisms—parading figures, chimes, telescoping rods with flags that wave, clockwork voices, and other fanciful amusements.

Other items they make for export include clockwork toys, elaborately trapped chests, and mechanical spit-turners. Their output is not great and their prices are high, limiting these things to the wealthy. These are often used as status symbols in the upper class of the League Cities, while the gnomes of Hitehkel are galled to find that the Bilo gnomes do better work than they on such items.

THE SCORNED

Living deep down at the roots of the Ring Mountains are the *Nylgai Hadirnoe,* the Dwarven Scorned. These are the dwarves who, with the coming of the Cataclysm, fled the horrendous destruction of the surface for the comforting safety of the deep caverns underneath the Ring Mountains. So deeply have they delved that those on the surface have all but forgotten of their existence. They, in turn, now tell grim and fanciful tales of the surface world to their small children. After more than 300 years of isolation, only the oldest of their people remember what life near the surface was once like.

The centuries of isolation have altered the appearance of the Nylgai. Males stand about four to four-and-a-half feet tall. The women average a half a foot shorter. Once they were a rotund and well-fleshed race. Now they are naturally lean, although they have retained the large-boned frame of their people. Their skin tone, once dark and ruddy, is pale brown tinged with red. Their eyes are large, a washed-out blue in color. Hair color ranges from flame red to straw blond. Their noses are large and broad. Men sport beards and the same is considered attractive in females.

The dress of dwarven men depends greatly on the social class of the dwarf. The majority are miners, sturdy workmen engaged in honest labor. These men wear rough coveralls and heavy smocks, brightly embroidered with clan designs around the neck and bottom hem. Boots are heavy and stout with loose-fitting tops. No miner would be found without his bandolier and tool pouch. In this he keeps his chisels and hammers, the signs of his trade.

Craftsmen dress similarly, although many wear a tighter fitting shirt (it does not do for a smelter to have his sleeve flapping into the molten ore). Craftsmen can be identified by the heavy leather apron that each wears, emblazoned with the crest of his trade. Upper-class dwarves (clan leaders and wealthy merchants) forgo the common dress of the working class, favoring heavy brocade robes decorated in runic designs. Small caps garnished with bright leather tassels and furred tails top off their outfit.

Dwarven women wear floor-length dresses, bound by sashes and gaily patterned with ribbons and embroidered appliques. Fancy dresses, such as those worn by women eligible for marriage, make use of sheer fabrics and soft leathers. More practical materials include heavy woolens of goat yarn and stiff leather.

Soldiering is a reputable and full-time trade in the eyes of the dwarves. Each clan is required to shoulder the cost of outfitting and maintaining a company of males (who are part of the War Clan). The soldiers of the company are given a standardized uniform, although the dress of two different companies may be quite different. Each man in the company may have identical shirts, a cap done in the same color, or a leather badge fixed to their breast. These marks are enough for the dwarves to identify each other by unit.

Master smiths that they are, the dwarves have greater access to fine iron than all other races but the gnomes. This they fashion into finely made suits of chain mail and plate armor, swords, spear heads, and shields. Typical arms and armor for a dwarven warrior consist of a chain mail hauberk, pot helm, shield, leaf-head spear, and double-edged sword. Each man carries a field kit in a leather backpack or bandolier. The kit usually contains blankets, rations, honing stone, polishing oil, and personal items.

As a further identifying device, each company has a particular crest and name. There are the Anvil, Chisel, Bonecracker, Rock Lizard, and Red Beard companies, to name a few. Each has its crest painted on its shield, usually in as fearsome a design as can be created. When arrayed in solid ranks, shield to shield, the dwarven companies present an awesome spectacle.

Although the Scorned Dwarves have forgotten much of the surface world, their long retreat has preserved much of their way of life. Unlike most of the surface dwellers, the Scorned did not lose their culture in the upheavals of Hiteh's Night. They have remained highly organized and civilized, especially in comparison to the humans and the elves,

The Scorned Dwarves are organized into a single nation. Regular censuses taken by their High Kings have placed the population at approximately 200,000 souls throughout the caverns of the *OdderRhing* or "Land Beneath the Mountains." These folk are spread throughout

the length of the OdderRhing, the extensive series of caverns that undermine the mountains. Each dwarf belongs to one of the clans that form the core of the dwarven government.

The dwarven clans are organized along the basis of classes or trades. Once they were guilds to which any number of families might belong. Now, profession and family are united under the single banner of the clan. All members of the clan are inter-related to one degree or another and are expected to take up the same occupation upon coming of age. Those clan members unsuited to the trade, for whatever reason, can apply for adoption in a more suitable clan. If accepted as a son or daughter, the adopted dwarf can enter his new profession. While this rigid structure ensures stability and continuity of the dwarven traditions, it can also stifle and constrict the spirit of dwarven initiative. This, however, is a price the dwarves are willing to accept.

Not all the clans are equal in importance. This varies according to the size and trade of the clan. The largest is the Miner Clan. A respectable, though not particularly impressive trade, the miners make up for this by their sheer numbers. Other clans (in no particular order of size or importance) include the Smiths, Casters, Scribes, Jewelers, Goldsmiths, Armorers, and Weavers. Each of these plays an important role in the community.

Four clans are of particular note, for their roles are special. The Guildmasters are a not particularly loved clan but are crucial to the economy of the nation. The Guildmasters do not produce goods but act as traders, exchanging the production of one clan for that of another. The clan is very small, but its power is immense. Everything produced by anyone outside the local community must pass through the hands of a Guildmaster. Iron weapons produced at one end of the OdderRhing are traded for food grown at another. Furs trapped are traded to the Guildmasters in exchange for equipment and money. The furs are then traded to the Tanner Clan for finished furs, the finished furs to the Furriers, and so on. Through all these transactions the Guildmasters make a little profit at each stage, making them extremely wealthy and powerful.

The second clan of note is the Outcasts. This clan is shunned by all others. Contact with the Outcasts is kept to a minimum and marriage to one is almost unthinkable. The Outcasts perform duties that are unclean and taboo to the rest of the people. They are responsible for burying the dead, cleaning wastes, cutting wood on the surface, trading with surface merchants, and interpreting the tongue of the disir, the deep-dwelling enemy of the dwarves. Although their positions give them access to unusual routes to power, they are generally poor and poorly treated by the others. Centuries of tradition have bound them to their roles with little complaint.

The third clan is the War Clan. This clan is the army of the dwarves. Only members of the War Clan can become soldiers and guards. To maintain the ranks of the military, the War Clan frequently enters into adoption pacts with other clans, even with the Outcasts. These clans provide suitable sons and marriageable daughters in exchange for guarantees of protection and safety. This is in addition to the maintenance costs the High King has decreed the clans must pay. In a way, the security of the nation is a brokered business.

The final clan of importance, indeed the most important, is the Chieftain's Clan. This is the royal house of the dwarves. It is from the ranks of the Chieftain's Clan that a High King is chosen. The selection is made by the votes of the other clans, chosen from the princes of the Chieftain's Clan. Once chosen, that chieftain is High King for life.

The other princes of the clan receive titles and offices as they are available and according to their abilities. These offices are normally given for life, but they can be revoked for treason or other high crimes. In addition, the members of the Chieftain's Clan have a number of hereditary titles that lend prestige and, in some cases, actual authority. Hereditary titles include Great Revoker, Treasurer of the Imperial Guard, Sergeant of the Black Gate, Imperial Drillmaster, Keeper of the Holy Forge, and Lord Firemaster. Offices (not hereditary titles) include Imperial Exchequer, Publican, Proconsul of the Black Gate, Chamberlain of the High King, Chamberlain of the High Queen, Steward of the Household, and Commander of the Faithful.

There is one post within the dwarven empire that is not under the sway of any clan. By rights, the post is one that should fall under the duties of the Outcasts. However, its position is far too important for that clan. The position of Imperial Ancestral Caretaker is a hereditary title of the Strompdal family. They belong to no clan. Their duties include the preparation and burial of the Chieftain's Clan dead and the execution of those of that clan who are sentenced to death. For the rest of the people, these duties are performed by the Outcasts. However, the royal family cannot be defiled by contact with the Outcasts, hence these duties are performed by the higher status Strompdal family. Unattached to any clan, they do not receive any stigma from their duties, nor do they bring shame to any clan.

The clans form the basis of the government. At its head is the High King. He is the sole ruler of the nation, after a fashion. Only he has the power to pass laws, muster the army for war, and levy taxes. Appointed by him or one of his predecessors are his administrators—those who see that the laws are enacted, enforced, and upheld.

The High King does not have absolute dictatorial rule. Advising him in all matters and expressing the will of the people is the Council of Clansmen. This is composed of chosen leaders from each Clan. The number of advisors each Clan is allowed depends on a complicated formula that considers the size of the clan (at the insistence of the Miner Clan) and the taxes paid by the clan (by which the Guildmaster Clan makes sure it is well represented).

To determine that representation in the council is accurate (and that the proper taxes are being paid) the High Kings regularly conduct censuses of people and property. One is always done when a new High King takes office. Thereafter, a new census must be done any time the High King attempts to levy

greater taxes than have been customarily paid. In addition, the High King can call for a census any time he feels the clans have succeeded in hiding too much of their property from his inspectors.

This method of raising and collecting taxes is the best method the clans have for resisting the edicts of an unpopular High King. More than once a High King has been forced to accommodate the clans when they have threatened him with open tax revolt. In general, those of the Chieftain's Clan have learned not to push their power and authority too far.

Dwarven Priests

Working with the High King and the clans are the artisan-priests of the Order of Makers, the religious core of the dwarves. Unlike other religions, the Makers did not lose their powers with the Flight of the Gods for the simple reason that they never had priestly powers to begin with. The Makers are experts at the mystical dwarven art of smithing, dwarves who through devotion to their work are able to create magical items. They are neither wizards nor priests; they are masters of the forge.

Their lives are dedicated to the three Earth Powers: Ferros, Auros, and Orgentos—the givers of earth's magical power. These three powers wax and wane according to complicated calendars the Makers have prepared. (In actuality, the Makers are tapping the powers of the three gods of magic, which wax and wane according to the cycles of the three moons of Krynn. Having never seen the moons, however, the dwarves can only feel their influence as it flows through the earth. Thus they equate these magical powers with earth gods.)

Before the Cataclysm, there were other beliefs among the dwarves. However with the Flight of the Gods, these priests lost their powers and their cults all but collapsed. Taking this as a sign of the supremity of their beliefs, the Makers have managed to convince the High Kings to proclaim the Order of Makers the state religion and ban all others. For the most part this has gone over well with the dwarves (who were never particularly religious anyway), but it has prevented the cult of Mislaxa from gaining a foothold in their land.

The dwarves are a self-contained society and thus do very little trading with the surface world. When they do trade, they are most interested in novelties they cannot find in their underground world. Finely carved woods, cotton, silk, paper, wine, olive oil, herbs, and spices all command high prices. They cannot abide the taste of most fruits and vegetables, which are too flavorful for their bland palates.

Valued dwarven goods include stone carvings, weapons, ingots of valuable pure dwarven steel, and magical items, particularly weapons and armor, which are almost priceless. They find the constructions of their cousins, the gnomes, fascinating in their mechanical splendor. The intricacy of the work is something they can appreciate, although they cannot understand how or why the gnomes persist in creating these devices without the aid or use of the magical power of the earth. Indeed, the dwarven smith's chant, as he hammers out a bar of iron on his anvil, goes "Magic and steel—CLANG! Magic and steel—CLANG! Forge gods give us magic and steel—CLANG!"

The dwarves lead simple lives. Their food is bland—roast meats, stews, mushrooms, roots, milk, and butter. Except for salt and metal powders, they do not have many flavorings, spices, or herbs. Lacking abundant supplies of wood, their furnishings are spartan, carved from stone and padded with wool- and moss-stuffed cushions.

Dwarves do have their passions. They rightly claim that no one makes a better ale, stout, or lager than their brewmasters—and they are quite willing to prove it to their guests. Another passion is for the spoken word. The dwarves have a love of stories, sagas, and plays—anything where the spoken word is important. Dwarven bards chant the tales of great heroes at feasts that last for days. The clans hold competitions, staging the classic works of ancient and modern playwrights. Poetry challenges, particularly of the demanding poem riddles and kennings, fill their evenings.

But the greatest passion of the dwarves is stone. In the centuries the dwarves have spent deep underground, one of their major goals has been to expand and beautify the tunnels, halls, and caverns that form their land. Thus there are work gangs mining, chiseling, carving, and shaping throughout the complex of tunnels. In this, most of all, they give the lie to the dour and austere image others have of them.

They love to embellish and decorate their stone in baroque styles. They are incapable of carving a simple pillar. It must have capitals, fluting, plinths, even elaborate faces. Walls are never simple dressed stone (unless it is to highlight an



even greater effect). They are covered with scenes, faces, and geometric designs. Some are meant to educate. Others are purely artistic, carved to highlight the strata of the rock. There is no one in the world better at creating carved works of great beauty than the master carvers of the Scorned.

Their carving has brought them disaster, also. As the dwarves continued their mining, they became obsessed with digging deeper and deeper into the earth. They confidently believed they were the masters of all the land under the surface, that they had the right to claim it all. It was during this deep delving that the miners breached a cavern moldering with the thick scent of death and decay. Something slaughtered those miners and left bodies as a sign. Thus the dwarves made their first contact with the disir.

The disir, a race of great evil and savagery, has lived in the earth far deeper than any man or dwarf of known time has ever ventured. Here they preyed on other denizens of the dark realms and on their own kind. Until their discovery by the dwarves, the disir had never ventured closer to the surface. Now that has changed. They have discovered a rich world in the tunnels above them. In the decades since they first appeared, the disir and the dwarves have been locked in a bloody and merciless war of extermination.

Very little is known of the disir. It is clear the disir are fecund, for the dwarves have killed enormous numbers of them. The disir also have magical or priestly power over the dead and can even turn the dwarven dead against their living brothers. Dwarves captured by them either escape quickly or meet gruesome deaths. This choice prevents the dwarves from learning much from freed captives.

Over the years in the colony chambers the dwarves have found, they have discovered and deciphered samples of the disir tongue. The few prisoners they have taken have taught them the words of their enemy, but no prisoner has lived long enough to provide a very complete vocabulary. It is only by the persistent work of Outcast scholars over the years that a working vocabulary has been built up. Now, Outcast spies have been able to listen in on secret conversations of the disir. This is risky work, for spies meet the worst ends of all.

The war has changed little in recent years. At the southern end of the OdderRhing the disir have seized several levels of chambers and are now almost within reach of the ancient human mines, the pathway to the surface. Previous attempts throughout the OdderRhing to sweep the disir from their tunnels have met with failure, for there always seem to be more secret tunnels that are only found later when the disir emerge from them.

Now the dwarves are trying a new strategy with the aid of a few gnomish and human wizards (a great concession on the part of the Scorned). Their latest campaign, which seems to promise a chance of victory, is to hunt out and destroy the breeding chambers of the disir. These raids are risky especially as time goes on and the disir deduce the dwarven strategy. To delay this, the dwarves are continuing in their old tactics, although these are done in areas well away from the suspected sites of breeding chambers.

The war has also caused a profound change in the people. Before the disir attacks, the dwarves were confident and self-assured as to the righteousness of their actions. Now it seems as if the gods have struck back at them. Disir raids are so sharp and sudden that the confidence of the people in the security of their homes has been undermined. Travelers are loathe to journey from settlement to settlement alone or even in small bands. Children grow up with the fear and hatred of the enemy. The clans place the blame for every failure on the disir threat. The dwarves are slowly becoming cynical and pessimistic, perhaps even defeatist. They are suffering a crisis in confidence akin to that felt by others at the time of the Cataclysm.

THE TIDERUN

Separating Northern and Southern Hosk is the great estuary known as the Tiderun. This is a broad, shallow fault opened during the Cataclysm. It connects the boiling waters of the Indanalis Sea to the Western Ocean. The banks are lined with thick stands of woods and brakes of salt marsh cane.

The Tiderun gets its name from the ebb and flow of its waters according to the influences of the moons. It has three basic conditions—flowing, ebbing, and dry. Flowing describes when its waters are highest, those times when the three moons of Krynn are not in conjunction with each other. During these times, water flows from the Western Ocean into the Indanalis. The estuary can be navigated by shallow-draft and flat-keeled ships in its flowing stage; merchantmen and rafters use this stage to make the dash to and from the Western Ocean with their cargoes.

The ebbing stage occurs as any two moons near conjunction with each other. Then the waters of the Tiderun slow and the banks recede, leaving muddy flats of cane to either side. The shallow draft boats are forced to beach and only the rafters can ply the low water.

The rarest condition is that of dry. This occurs only when the three moons are all in conjunction. During these times, the Tiderun actually retreats so much that the estuary dries up completely in the center section. All that is left are two greatly reduced arms, one by the Western Ocean and another by the Indanalis Sea. During these times, the trading caravans hurriedly cross the vast, muddy expanse of the Tiderun. Timing is important as the waters return rapidly. No trader wants to caught in the center when the ocean waters return.

Since it is a major, though erratic, waterway, the Tiderun has attracted a wide assortment of settlers and rogues. The minotaurs of the League have established several trading cities on the northern continent—Rudil being the largest.

Where the Tiderun pierces the Ring and Steamwall ranges, smaller trading towns have sprung up to accommodate the merchant caravans crossing during the dry periods. While the southern of these two towns (Faroen) falls under the nominal jurisdiction of the League, the northern town (Malton) is a law unto itself under the rule of the self-styled Count Ricar. Both are rough-and-tumble places, but Malton is

particularly noted for its quick justice and free-wheeling style. It is a particular sore point to the League, which regularly accuses Ricar of harboring the river pirates that ply the estuary.

Aside from the nuisances of occasional goblin raiders from the Ilquar and the lizard men who sometimes attempt to board unwary vessels that pass their settlements in the canebrake, the greatest danger of the river is the pirates. These buccaneers patrol the river in their keelboats and rafts, swooping down on merchant ships to make off with their cargoes. The best known of these pirates is the renegade minotaur Haralt the Gray. He commands a small fleet of five keelboats and over 100 men and minotaurs. When not prowling the river, Haralt can be found in Malton, enjoying the company of Count Ricar, whom he keeps well supplied with stolen booty.

RUDIL

To call Rudil a city (as the inhabitants do) is perhaps stretching the truth. Originally founded as a trading post for the Tamire trade, it has grown into a large town, the most sizeable seaport on the coast of Northern Hosk. (Of course it is about the only seaport in Northern Hosk.)

Rudil has a population of about 5,000. (Its sister settlements, Milgath and Barask, have populations of about 1,000 each.) By the terms of the agreement reached between the Uigan and other tribes of the Tamire, Rudil is allowed only a small area of the coast. Rudil sits at the center of this area, surrounded by the farmland needed to maintain the population.

Currently the three towns are straining at the seams. Before further growth can occur, the League must reach a new agreement with the nomads of Tamire or risk going to war. The latter option the inhabitants of Rudil do not relish, for they have heard tales of what the Uigan do to prisoners. Some of them even remember the earlier wars with the Uigan. One reminder of those days are the stone and earth walls that still surround the outermost perimeter of the city.

Rudil and the surrounding lands come under the control of the League, the minotaur-dominated government of Southern Hosk. As such it follows the laws and customs of the South. The territory is ruled by an appointed governor who lives in the keep built on the small bluff at the edge of the waterfront.

As is the case in all League towns, minotaur law and order is rigorously maintained through the swift and discriminating use of force. Brawlers are beaten senseless first and then questions are asked. Few citizens in their right minds resist arrest or make trouble when the guard is around. Caravan guards, sailors, and Uigan warriors are more likely troublemakers. To lessen the problem, the town has set aside a separate caravansary compound on the outskirts of town. This area honest citizens try to avoid, while those who own businesses there hire numerous burly peacekeepers or bouncers.

Although it is small, Rudil has a wide variety of services. It is a gateway to both the unknown Western Ocean and the wilds of the Tamire. The caravansary compound is filled with inns, taverns, stables, and outfitters. Along the waterfront are chandlers, shipwrights, and sail makers. There are horse dealers who trade with the Uigan, ironmongers who purchase goblin steel, wholesalers, grocers, mercers, guides, navigators, riverboatmen, fishermen, clamdiggers, and oyster divers.

Outside the city, farmers struggle with the hard, rocky soil to grow the crops to feed the town. Cowherds sit watch to keep the nomads from rustling a cow here and there. Optimistic horsebreeders try to improve the bloodstock of the Tamire, while camel trainers ready their animals for trips across the dry steppes. But most colorful of all is the great bazaar that fills the central square.

Each morning as soon as it is light, the square begins to fill with merchants. Around the outer edge are the permanent stalls of established dealers. Every morning the gaily colored awnings are raised and goods are laid out on rugs and low tables for all to inspect. In the center of the square, traveling merchants lay out their rugs piled with exotic treasures from north and south.

Whisking away flies and calling out in a melange of droning, piercing, booming, and sing-song chants, the merchants bide their time. Soon the square fills with people. The odors of roasted meats, exotic spices, heady wine, sweat, tobacco, and over-ripe fruit intensify in the heat of the sun. As the day's heat increases, the crowd thins. The merchants crawl back into the shade of their awnings or stretch out under an improvised tent to sip thick, sweet coffee and rest until the late afternoon. Gradually the crowds return. Entertainers come—singers, jugglers, acrobats, and puppeteers—to provide entertainment in exchange for coins. The morning's cycle of sights and sounds repeats itself. Finally dusk falls and the shoppers go home; the merchants wearily pack their goods, roll up their carpets, and close their shutters. The guard makes its rounds to collect the governor's tax. Just behind them come the enforcers for the local protection racket out to collect their fee for another peaceful day.

As with all towns, Rudil has its tales. It is, after all, a gathering place for adventurous souls preparing to set out into the unknown. Gossip and rumors abound. There are tales of rich townsmen who make their way posing as crippled beggars, homes of eccentric (and absent) wizards piled high with treasures.

There are wrongs to be righted and evil to be overcome. The harbormaster is said by some to be in league with the river pirates, alerting them to rich cargoes headed their way. Secret meetings of Hiteh's followers have been reported near the North Wall. A dragonrider may have just landed outside the walls. Secret police of the Great Illustrious Leader of All Nations, the minotaur emperor, may be scouring the city looking for a certain thief. But of course, all of these are gossip and rumors.



SOUTHERN HOSK

"If a man seizes property by force and the property is recovered, the plaintiff and the defendant may enter the Arena in what armor they can afford. If a man seizes property by force and it is not recovered, that man may not avail himself of armor. If the man maliciously disposes of the property or renders it unrecoverable by intention, the combat is to the death."

—Regulations of Ambeortin VII,
Legal Codex of the League

The second largest landmass of Taladas is the southern half of the old continent of Hosk, now known rather unimaginatively as Southern Hosk. In addition to its great size, it is also the most populated and civilized of all the lands of Taladas. It is the home of the Imperial League of the Minotaur Cities (commonly called the Minotaur League or Merchant League or just the League), the Kingdoms of Armach and Thenol, and the thunderous mountains of the Steamwall.

Like its northern counterpart, Southern Hosk spans a broad arc, forming the southwestern part of the continent. The northern portion of this arc is an extension of the underlying shield that spans the Tamire. This has split along a fault at the Tiderun. This shield creates a level plain in the northwesternmost corner of the continent. As this extends to the south and east, the ground gradually rises. This forces river drainage into this plain, carrying rich silts to nourish the land. The combination of rich land, water, and temperate climate, moderated by the winds off the Western Ocean, makes this the most fertile farmland of all of Taladas.

Farther to the south, the rising lands give way to the New Mountains. Created by the abrupt uplift of several underlying faults, these mountains are not particularly high, but they are still growing. There is mild volcanic activity, but this is very minor as these things go in Taladas. The New Mountains are divided into a series of small ranges separated by broad valleys. Higher and cooler than the plain, these valleys provide abundant pasture and lumber for the people living there.

At the southern end of the New Mountains is the Confederation of Armach. The land here falls away abruptly from the high pastures to the coastline at the Bay of Hoor. As a result, much of the coast is rugged cliff, a sharp drop to the rocks below. The weather is warm year round and the rainfall is good, but the soil is thin and badly eroded, making farming only fair.

Traveling farther to the south, one descends from the plateau formed by the continental shield. Now the underlying layer of granite gives way to softer bedrock. The ranges of the New Mountains taper off and become lower and rounder. With the exception of the areas immediately around the lower ranges (now barely more than hills), the land drops almost to sea level. Warm, wet southwestern breezes blowing off the Windless Ocean drop large amounts of rain over this region. The kingdom of Thenol and the wilds around it are dotted by subtropical forests and swamp.

Moving inland from the coast, the ground changes little. Along the innermost edge of Southern Hosk, the Steamwall blocks the access to the Indanalis Sea. Except for a series of foothills in the north, the range rises with little warning. Unlike the New Mountains, the Steamwall is high, rugged, and bleak. The western foothills (what little there are) are covered with darkly twisted rain forests. Downpours occur almost daily and the lush growth is recast in darker forms by the polluted rains that blow down out of the mountains. Higher up the slopes, the overgrowth gives way to rock-hugging ground plants and eventually lichens. At the very heights, just below the snows, only the hardiest plants can survive the deadly rains blown over from the Indanalis.

While the western slopes are merely bleak, the eastern slopes of the Steamwall are a nightmare. Hideously corrupted plants with pale, gelatinous leaves and pus-like sap suck up the foul minerals and breathe the acidic steams of the Indanalis. It is said that some crawl about and even mewl and moan in hungry little voices. More likely these are heat-fired delusions of fever-stricken castaways, their brains boiled by the steaming mists of the ocean. Other things, perhaps once animals, are said to be even more loathsome and dangerous. Most often the memories of these bring only shuddering terror to those travelers who have become lost in the Steamwall.

Nonetheless, the Steamwall holds a lure for the courageous or foolhardy. In the taverns of the League there are tales of this fellow or that fellow—always the cousin of a friend or a traveler met by a caravan—who has discovered ancient treasures hidden in the deep valleys of the range. Perhaps there are treasures to be found; perhaps there was only one treasure and the tale has been repeated over and over; perhaps it's all a lie.

The region once held the burial valleys of kings and princes; once there were great monasteries and temples there. Ancient Aurim's might once extended to the old mountain ranges. Here nobles spent the hot winters in palatial villas. Here also dwarves lived in great caverns just below the surface. Here elves hunted and played. Perhaps lost treasures from these times were not all destroyed.

Where the people of Northern Hosk are wild and savage for the most part, the people of Southern Hosk are settled and civilized. The most significant group on the continent is the Imperial League of Minotaur Cities. Dominated by the seafaring minotaurs, the League carries the mantle of ancient Aurim. It can trace its history in part to the people and rule of Aurim, although that great Empire never had minotaurs to contend with. The League is the greatest power, both culturally and politically, within Southern Hosk. Over the centuries it has been steadily expanding and increasing in power.

Beyond the borders of the League are the barbarian peoples—at least according to the minotaurs. Some of these such as the wildmen of the New Mountains fit this description. Others are barbarians in title only, named so for the simple fact that they are not citizens of the Empire.

The most significant of these are the natives of Armach and Thenol.

Armach is an anomaly in the land of Taladas. It would have been a barbaric backwater had not a great storm driven the elves of Silvanesti (in Ansalon) into the sheltered bay of Hoor. These elves were part of the Great Armada that set sail from Silvanesti to the lands of the Qualinesti, voyaging around the entire span of the continent. Forced to scatter by minotaur pirates from Mithas, this portion of the fleet was caught up in a raging storm. Running before the wind, it was all they could do to stay afloat. Finally the ships were driven into the rocky coast of Hoor. Marooned in a strange land, the elves have worked together to build a new life.

Farther south is the Kingdom of Thenol. Though the inhabitants are humans descended from the same stock as those of the League, these have since gone into greatly different territory, both physically and morally. Thenol is a sinister land, its leaders evil and corrupted. Few travel there and fewer still enjoy their stay.

Empires and kingdoms are not the only places where people (and other things) live. The Steamwall, a place many would consider uninhabitable, is home to many creatures. Living in the forests near its base are the Hasmana Clan, a small collection of dwarves with a very different view of life. Farther up in the mountains are other dwarven clans that live more traditional existences. Also hidden in the tucks and folds of the Steamwall are colonies of goblins, ogres, and hurdu, a group of evil lizard-like men. And of course, there are dragons. The Steamwall is home to many of the dragons of Taladas. The great creatures seem to like the foul and difficult conditions of the mountains.

THE IMPERIAL LEAGUE OF MINOTAURS

Once the world of Taladas counted the Empire of Aurim the greatest wonder in all the world. No other land could rival it for magnificence and splendor. But that was before the terror of the Cataclysm that shattered the provinces and satrapies of Aurim. The greatest wonder of the world was no more.

However, the Empire of Aurim was not completely cast down and forgotten. Like the shards of a broken plate, parts of it splintered and broke, spinning away from the whole. Most were ground into dust in the black years that followed. Unable to prevent the ravages of plague, the convulsions of the earth, or the assaults of foul creatures, the satraps and generals quickly found themselves overwhelmed by the troubles of Hiteh's Night. Petty claimants to the title of emperor and independent kingdoms suddenly appeared and vanished as quickly. Still the dream of Great Aurim lived on.

One of the farthest outposts of the Empire was a small, rustic province, Styrllia. It lay on the western edge of the great mountains that divided Taladas, barely in contact with the rest of the Empire. When the Cataclysm struck, Styrllia managed to escape the worst of the destruction, but it was evident to the people they could not remain among the unstable mountains. Under the leadership of Guidan and Kristophus, the people set out on a trek for safer lands.

Scouts were sent in all directions. From the east and west came back grim reports of boiling seas, burning lands, and more towering mountains. From the west and south the scouts returned with reports of primitive forests and swampy jungles, both filled with dangerous creatures and other, perhaps even worse terrors.

Based on the reports of the scouts, Guidan and Kristophus decided to divide the people into two groups. Guidan would lead one expedition to the south and west, looking for a new homeland beyond the mountains and swamps. Kristophus would lead the other to the west, searching for a path through the forests to the sea beyond. So ordered by their leaders, the people of Styrllia gathered their goods and set out.

For the people following Kristophus, the trek was far from easy. Their route carried them through trackless forests inhabited by hungry, evil creatures. Disease and starvation, new horrors, dogged their steps. The people became convinced they were being led to a wonderful promised land. As the weeks passed and utopia never appeared, they became disillusioned and restless. Many dropped out to form small villages in peaceful-seeming mountain valleys and river bottoms. Some of these have succeeded and now proudly maintain their independence from the Children of Aurim (as they call Kristophus's band). Others were not so fortunate. Their meager homes have long since been swallowed up by the wild.

Among those who continued the trek, there was disharmony and dispute. More than once Kristophus had to rely on the guardsmen loyal to him and his family. Rebels were given the choice of being left behind, which was often little more than a sentence of death, or surrendering into Kristophus's custody. Those who surrendered he spared at the cost of their properties and then assigned to the care of the remaining loyal families. His measures were draconian, but the people held together.

Eventually, Kristophus and his people reached a good land. In a narrow band along the coast, the forest gave way to grassy meadows. Here the farming was good, lumber was close at hand, and the sea provided fresh fish, a novelty to these people. Kristophus chose to settle his people here and founded the town of Kristophan in the land of New Styrllia. The settlers were not many and the first decade for their settlement was hard, but eventually it grew into a network of towns.

The trek had changed the society of the Styrllians profoundly. Before their departure, the majority of the people had been freeholders, farmers and herders with property of their own. A few families made fortunes in the trading business, shipping products to and from Aurim. A small group of skilled craftsmen formed a tiny middle-class, beholden to the merchant families, but not bound to them.

By the time the group reached the sea, Kristophus's measures for dealing with the rebels had changed things dramatically. The people who arrived were di-

vided into two classes, the Loyal Families and the Rebels. Few had managed to remain neutral during the march. During the rebellions on the march, the Loyal Families received favored treatment by the Satrap, such that their fortunes dwindled less. They were exempted from grueling labor taxes and appropriations of equipment for the guard. The property of the Rebels was divided among the Loyal Families. During the course of the march, many weak and unimportant households actually managed to increase in importance and wealth.

For the Rebels, the situation was reversed. Once classed as a Rebel, all property was confiscated and given over to the Loyal Families. Each Rebel household was then assigned to the service of a Loyal Family. In exchange for service, passed from father to son, the masters provided for the needs and protection of the Rebel family. By the time Kristophus's Styrllians reached the ocean, institutional slavery was an established practice.

The hardships of the Styrllians were not over yet, however. A mountain people settled by the sea, they were poor sailors and fishermen. For the most part, they turned their backs on the ocean. They became farmers, gradually clearing more and more of the forest away for their fields. Concerned with the land, they built their defenses to face inland, protecting them from the attacks of hostile neighbors and wandering creatures. They lacked the skills of boat-building and navigation and so never developed fleets or naval tactics. Indeed,. they had never seen a threat from the sea. Then the minotaurs arrived.

For centuries, the minotaurs had been master sailors, plying the oceans of Ansalon on the other side of the world. They had sailed all of Ansalon and crossed the Western Ocean to the land of Taladas, though there was nothing to find. With the Cataclysm, the shackles of Istar were broken and the minotaurs took to the seas in earnest. Their skill as sailors quickly made them formidable pirates and their ambitions of empire made them dangerous raiders. As they ranged farther and wider, it was only a matter of time before they again crossed the ocean and found the settlements of Kristophus. Facing landward, these were easy victims to the horned raiders from the sea.

This would have been little more than a sad chapter in the history of New Styrllia had it not been for the far-sightedness and ambition of Eragas the Brutish. Like all minotaurs, he was fired with ambition to rule. Backed by his fellows, Eragas seized the government of New Styrllia and proclaimed himself the new Emperor. His challengers were quickly dispatched in a makeshift Arena, according to minotaur fashion. A new era was begun,

In the centuries that followed, the minotaur lands have expanded and grown. There have been many factors contributing to its success. A strong tradition of empire, among both the humans and the minotaurs, made acceptance of Emperor Eragas easier. The military might of the minotaurs left their rule unchallenged. The minotaurs had tried and tested systems of governing, copied from the Pirate Kingdoms of Ansalon, but also wisely accommodated the laws and customs of the humans into their own systems. Finally, the land and other people of the region were ripe for conquest and civilization. A combination of these factors (and perhaps the blessing of the gods) has caused the initial conquests of the minotaurs to become the lands of the Minotaur League.

THE LANDS OF THE LEAGUE

Currently the Minotaur League consists of five provinces: New Styrllia, the capital of the empire; Eragala, along the Tiderun; Okami, the forest region; Highvale, along the edge of the New Mountains; and the Conquered Lands, the most recent addition, one that presses close to the borders of Thenol. The League also has the outpost towns of Rudil, across the Tiderun, Faroen, at the base of the Steamwall, and Brilmantar, deep in the Steamwall range.

When one speaks of the Minotaur League, however, one normally means the Five Great Cities that form the heart of the Empire. These are Kristophan, Trilloman (both in New Styrllia), *Vinlans* (in Highvale), and Morgad and Thera (both in Eragala).

Each city has its own character. Kristophan remains the imperial capital and is the center of government and culture throughout the empire. Trilloman, its sister city, is the hub of trade throughout the empire. To the south, Vinlans is noted for its fine crops, wines and grapes in particular. Morgad is the greatest seaport of the League, second in trade only to Trilloman. Finally, there is Thera, the Pleasure City. Noted for its cool summer weather and natural hot springs, Thera has become renowned as the playground of the wealthy and powerful, minotaur and human alike.

However, the League is more than just the Five Great Cities. Each province is dotted with towns, villages, farmland, and industries that provide the lifeblood of the empire. The population is densely packed into the areas of good land, the farmers gathering together into small towns. These are connected by roads maintained by the taxes of the people. Convict and slave gangs are constantly engaged in building and repairing the road network. Well-constructed bridges span all but the largest rivers.

Other areas are covered with thick forests. Here lumbermen and trappers rely on the rivers to carry their goods to the market towns. On the fringes of the Steamwall range and on the slopes of the New Mountains, miners dig for ore, particularly the valuable steel. Garrisons are stationed throughout the provinces to protect the people and quell any rebellions.

THE PROVINCES

Of course, the cities are not the only thing to be found in the Empire. Although the cities are the most spectacular features, the provinces are equally important to the strength of the Empire. Grain, fruit, lumber, ore, milk, leather, indeed everything needed to feed and supply the cities comes from the rural lands. Woodsmen from the frontiers serve in the army as scouts. Dwarves trained in the arts of



mining build the monuments that fill the cities.

Nor are the provinces lacking in wonders natural and man-made. Here and there are the evidences of ancient Aurim or far older kingdoms of the demihumans. The uplift of the Cataclysm has changed ordinary landscapes into exotic vistas. Often located far from civilization, these places are little visited except for deadly creatures and intrepid explorers.

New Styrllia

Aside from Kristophan, Glory of the Empire, New Styrllia is best noted for its wide plains of farmland. Once it was thick with rich forests; now these have been reduced to small copses that remain in the waste ground, land unsuitable for farming. Along the sea are many small picturesque fishing villages. The greatest wonder of all, however, is not found within the province but in the pearl beds off its coast. There, among the riches of the sea, are sunken ruins according to the divers who have ventured there and survived to return. These ruins are shunned by the locals and not even the temptation of prize pearls will persuade them to dive there. The divers tell stories of horrible sea monsters and strange fish-eyed people still dwelling among the ruins.

Eragala

Stretching from the rocky cliffs overlooking the Western Ocean to the swampy plain of the Tiderun, Eragala is the second-most populated province of the Empire. A practical land inhabited by practical people, Eragala is not without its wonders. One of the more mysterious can be found along the secluded bays and inlets. There, far from other settlements, are lonely hamlets where the villagers are decidedly odd. More withdrawn than even the naturally reticent peasant, they look normal—almost. They carry themselves slightly differently and deep in their eyes is a hidden longing for the sea.

These villagers are the Children of the Sea. Over the generations, men and women of the village have been visited at night by handsome and beautiful strangers, perhaps elves of the watery deep. **A** night is spent and the stranger is gone. A woman will bear a child different from the others or a strange babe will be found in a basket washed up on the shore. Such are the Children of the Sea.

The wise father treats his foundling child well, for then his nets will be full and his boat will never founder on the rocks. Ill fate awaits the man who mistreats his child. The child, held in both awe and contempt, grows mysterious and wild. More than one strange story is told of the powers of such children and more than one has disappeared later in life under mysterious circumstances.

Not mysterious but majestic is the Luminari, the lighthouse at the mouth of the Tiderun. Build atop the chalk cliffs of the shore, it is a slender tower rising 400 feet above the land. At its pinnacle is an ever-burning light, visible for miles, that aids sailors in finding their location and in avoiding the dangerous shoals at the Tiderun's mouth. It is said the lighthouse was built by Eragas himself, with the aid

of black sorceries. Its perpetual light is rumored to be powered by a fabulous treasure. No man tends the light nor will any local climb its stairs, even though the door at its base stands enticingly open. Tales are spun of master thieves who have entered and never returned. Just what horrors, if any, are inside no one knows.

Okami

Covered in thick forests blanketing rugged ground, Okami is a vague memory of evil to those who are descended from the original settlers of New Styrllia. It was through these dark forests that the wanderers suffered the greatest hardships and terrors. Foul creatures stalked their route, while dissension split the ranks. Many small settlements were left in the wake of the march. Most of these were never heard from again.

The dark forests of Okami were the original home of the hulderfolk, people who have long since moved to the outer fringes of the Empire. However traces of their lives still remain. Hidden among the trees are pleasant-seeming glades where the hulderfolk once gathered. These still have lingering traces of hulderfolk magic. A man may nap in such a glade dreaming of a night in the company of the hulder, only to awaken and find a decade has passed. Another profanes the powers of these people and their sacred grounds, only to lose the memory of his own life. A third may foolishly enter the glade during the full moon, only to lose his wits, forever touched by the power of the hulder.

A greater evil than that in the glades lurks in the forests. Those who stayed behind on Kristophus's march did not vanish entirely. Their fields and villages were reclaimed by the forest, but the people did not disappear. Now the people remain as bergasts, undead lurking among the rotting remains of moss-covered huts, continuing on in a grotesque parody of their sunlit lives. Sheltered by the unnaturally thick canopy, they hunt, chop wood, draw water, and work at phantom fields, all without purpose or result. Driven by hateful energies, they slay any who fall into their clutches, all the time intoning the grievances they have against the living.

Highvale

Forming the border with Armach, Highvale province has seen more than its share of battles. Scattered along its borders, at the mouths of passes and along the coast, are fortifications of all types. Now more concerned about Thenol, Armach and the League have entered into a truce and most of the forts and castles are abandoned. Although funds are allotted to maintain those deemed most strategic, these monies are siphoned away by corrupt administrators long before they reach the Highvale frontier. Because of this, most of the buildings are falling into min.

Furthermore, most of the garrisons have been pulled from the Armach border to strengthen the forces along the Thenol frontier. The creatures of the New Mountains have taken advantage of this and have returned to their old haunts. Although the peasants have complained about suffering the attacks of great monsters, the current emperor has done nothing to ease their hardship.

One fortification was not built by the Empire. Surrounding the base of Mount Bluetop, at the very edge of the frontier, is a wall. Built of crudely cut, unmortared stone, it stands almost 15 feet high all around. At regular intervals are small watchtowers and the wall is pierced by many gates. Curiously enough, it appears that the wall is made to protect against something on the inside, something dwelling on the mountain. The towers look inward and the gate bars are on the outside.

Many a curious wizard has hired adventurous souls to investigate the region, but none have met with any success. Outside the wall, there are no signs of who built it or why. Inside, the bold have scoured the mountain, searching for a clue as to what was kept there. Many a skeleton of man or demihuman has been found, but there are no clues as to what the builders so

The Conquered Lands

Carved from the wilderness and the territories of savage barbarians, the Conquered Lands are wild and untamed. It is a province for the hardiest pioneers, those who shun the corrupting comforts of civilization. Each town, each village is a fortress ready to defend against marauding beasts and raiders from Thenol. Vast sections of the province, especially away from the rivers, have yet to be mapped. Only a few roads have been built into the wilderness so far.

The wonders of the Conquered Lands have yet to be cataloged. On its border is the current homeland of the hulderfolk, beyond that are the dark lands of Thenol. Within it still are undefeated villages of goblins and tribes of ogres. Great caves that lead to the realms of powerful wizards are supposed to be found in the hills. Dragons and their mysterious riders are said to live in the forests. There are even tales of a forest in which the trees speak and grow tall enough to reach the moons! But, as with all frontier tales, there are exaggerations and half-truths. Practical men are certain that when all is said and done, half the wonders described have never existed and the other half are less than what the storytellers claim.

SOCIETY AND SOCIAL CLASS

The Minotaur League is a very class-oriented society. Every citizen—minotaur, man, elf, gnome, or dwarf—has a position that affects his lot in life and even extends to minor details of his daily life. While the law gives protection to all classes, even slaves, its application varies from class to class.

Socially, there is no one more important than the Emperor and the Royal Family. This includes not just the Queens and Royal Children, but also the uncles, aunts, nieces, and nephews of the Imperial Line. In recognition of their status, members of the Imperial Family are normally assigned government posts. For the most part these posts provide a good living for little work. No one (especially not the Emperor) wants members of the Im-

perial Household to have too much power, Thus the positions received are a method of buying them off.

Still, the Imperial Family is not above the law, although they are immune to large sections of it. With the exception of the Emperor, the family is subject to lawsuits and trials just as anyone else. However, their wealth and position make these impractical matters at best. The Imperial family has much power among the judiciary (Praetors) and bureaucrats. Only flagrant crimes or those that present a threat to the Emperor (or a more powerful member of the household) ever seem to come to trial.

At the same time, the Imperial Family is limited by the Emperor and the Emperor relies on the support of his people. It behooves him to prevent his family from gross excesses and flagrant violations of the law. Those emperors who have allowed themselves and their families to become decadent find themselves brought into the Arena to stand trial for their crimes. Weakened by their ways, they have more often than not been proven guilty.

After the Imperial Family, the next in status are the Horned Houses, the minotaurs of the League. Much lip service is given to the credo that any minotaur, no matter what his station, has precedence over members of other races. In actual practice, this standard is observed more in the breach than in the observance. While the wealthy and strong minotaurs have clear dominance over all others, those bulls and cows of lower status often find themselves indebted to the human and dwarven merchants of the League. As a result, many of the creditors raise themselves to a status approaching that of the minotaurs.

This has led to the rise of a special social class, technically lower than minotaurs but higher than the "pure" human families. These people, through their wealth or service, are allowed to place the formal "-iskis" at the end of their name, a appellation reserved for minotaur clans. In addition, they are accorded the status of minotaur in the eyes of the law. This is particularly important for property rights, taxation, magical patenting, and Arena settlements.

For example, General Rilkin Connersbaugh has earned the minotaur status by virtue of his victories against the Thenol. In a great ceremony, he was given the full title Commander of the Imperial Left Rilkin Connersbaughiskis, although in normal communications he is still referred to as Connersbaugh, the -iskis saved for formal proclamations.

Of the normal humans, the Loyal Families are the highest in status. Although they originally fought and resisted the minotaur invasion, their families and power provided the structure on which the empire was built. Ever adaptable, most of the families learned to accommodate and profit from their new masters and thus retained their positions. Those families that remained truly loyal to the Kristophus family (and so actually deserved the title of Loyal Families) were exterminated along with Kristophus or were broken and scattered, their lands and holdings claimed by the minotaurs and their allies. Because of their actions against Kristophus, to this day the name Loyal Family has a bitter and hateful connotation to the common people.

The bulk of the empire is composed of common citizens. These include journeymen craftsmen, freehold farmers, frontiersmen, small merchants, and tradesmen. Citizenship is allowed to property holders and the creators of manufactured goods—vintners, craftsmen, smiths, etc. These are the people the Emperor must protect and please. Although their rights are much less under the law than the highest of the high, they are a significant force. They are numerous where the rulers are few. Though the Emperor may have better men and weapons, these cannot be everywhere.

In the past the people have stormed governors' palaces, rioted in the streets of Kristophan, and burned the harbor of Morgad. In each of these cases, retribution was swift and brutal, but the damage caused and the threat of more forced the Emperor in command to revise his policies or tread more lightly.

Beneath the common citizens are the unfranchised people—those who are not slaves but have not earned the rights of citizenship. These include sharecroppers, free servants, apprentices, and others who work for a master but are not owned by him. Their legal rights are among the least, both by law and circumstance. Imperial decrees limit their ability to complain against their landlords and masters. Lack of money prevents them from pressing those cases they can. Many a strapping man of the unfranchised has chosen to risk his life for the fortune and fame of the Arena.

At the lowest level of society are the slaves. Many are descendants of the Rebel families given into the custody of the Loyal Families. A few can trace their lineage more recently to one of the families that defended Kristophus against the minotaur invasion, the true Loyal Families. Others are captives taken in the wars of expansion the minotaurs have waged on their neighbors. Not a few are peasants who failed in their attempts to rebel against their horned overlords.

Even slaves have certain legal protections. While few of these concern themselves with a master's treatment of his property, there are many that set the legal responsibilities of a master for his slave. There are strict conditions regarding sale, responsibility for crimes committed, conditions by which a slave can stand in the Arena, and set terms whereby a slave can purchase or receive his freedom. Still, even with all these conditions and protections, a slave's life remains vile and undesirable.

Within this carefully outlined social structure of legal rights and obligations, foreigners fall through the cracks of the system. As a solution, no foreigner is allowed to represent himself in any legal action. Instead, he must have a sponsor to present his claim. The social level of the sponsor, who must be a citizen of the empire, determines the social level of the foreigner in the subsequent inquiry into the case. Foreigners (especially those from the Tamire) find this fascination with the legal process stupefying if at least not mystifying. However, given the government and legal system of the League, these distinctions are important.

THE GOVERNMENT

With all its bizarre collection of races, temperaments, and attitudes, it is amazing that the government of the League functions at all, let alone that it is able to function as efficiently as it does. It is not a perfect system and evil emperors and incompetent governors often appear under it. Still it is resilient enough to withstand these abuses and continue to hold the empire together.

At the head of the empire is naturally the emperor. Each emperor is able to trace his bloodline directly to the founder of the empire, Eragas. Of course, the emperor is always a minotaur. The current emperor is Ambeoutin XI. The emperor is the greatest power in the realm. All laws and edicts are made in his name and theoretically with his consent and approval. Of course, few emperors have time to see every law passed and so generally confine themselves to sweeping pronouncements that are then interpreted and implemented by under-secretaries and minor functionaries. The emperor's word is absolute law, within the limits presented by army mutinies, provincial rebellions, and armed mobs in the street.

Surrounding the emperor is his household. In addition to wives and family, this includes chancellors, secretaries, scribes, stewards, and treasurers. Most of these positions are filled by Imperial princes, dukes, and other family members. Wise emperors allot these positions with great care, reserving the most powerful posts for non-family members. A chamberlain can have great influence on who can and cannot see the emperor—a powerful tool in the hands of an ambitious relative.

Even the Emperor is not all-powerful, for he must work with the approval of the Senate. Each minotaur family is allowed a Senator. Since supporting a Senator at the Imperial Capital is a costly proposition, most of the smaller families offer their proxies to the wealthier households. Some of these proxies are bought outright; others are traded for some special consideration—a law providing tax relief specifically to that family or a title to be conferred on the family. The amassing of these proxies divides the minotaurs into different factions.

Each Loyal Family is allowed one Senator. Again, the costs are prohibitive for many of them and the selling of proxies is a common practice.

Finally the common citizens elect Publicans. Each of the Five Great Cities is allowed one Publican. Since the costs of these Publicans are borne by the state, they are not allowed to vote by proxy. To further ensure their honesty to the common people, once a year each Publican must appear among the common people of his city without the protection of the law. This event is known as Publican's Day.

On this day, the Publican is required to walk the streets of his city from sunrise to sunset. The event can be likened to a small war. The Publican parades through the streets, protected by as many troops as he can afford. Meanwhile the people opposed to him attempt to amass their forces to overwhelm the guard and seize the Publican. Of course, factions loyal to him may try to stop the mob and before long open street warfare begins. Sometimes the enthusiasm of the rioters spills over into the night and next day. By tradition, the army is loosed on any remaining mobs and no mercy or quarter is given. Still Publican's Day is the traditional spark that has started open revolt in the cities. Attempts to outlaw it have been futile, for the people are far too fond of it.

The Senate's power is more limited than that of the Emperor. First and foremost, the Senate hears high court cases. For those they can set the terms on (by mutual agreement), they settle and send to the Arena. Any cases that remain are deemed to be the jurisdiction of the Emperor. Thus, the Senate screens the Emperor from a number of unnecessary cases. The Senate can also propose new Edicts for the Emperor to consider. He is not required to follow their suggestions, although given their ability to make his life miserable (through their control of the caseload), it is often wise to heed their words. Finally, the Senate can vote to censure any Edict of the Emperor although this is best done in only the most extreme cases.

Although the Emperor and the Senate rule the empire, the day-to-day issues are dealt with by the appointed officials. The greatest of these are the governors of the provinces. Under them are the commanders of the garrisons, the revenue agents, and the myriad of bureaucrats needed to make a large government work. For the most part these officials do their business with little interference or guidance from the capital. The Emperor issues edicts and determines the general course of policy. The governors implement these policies and keep order in their lands. Although the governors' duties are defined and limited by the voluminous legal codes of the Empire, the actual working of the system is left to the individual leaders.

In keeping with the minotaur tradition of justice, appointees to office must appear in the Arena against their predecessors. The winner of the combat has earned the right to the office. Unlike many arena combats, these challenges are seldom to the death and are often purely ceremonial. In the latter case, the departing official simply submits to the incoming official as soon as the bell of the Arena is sounded.

Although the assignment and removal of appointed officials is normally an orderly business, the death of an emperor results in a mad and bloody scramble for position. New emperors frequently sweep out the old administration and post their own appointees. The current officeholders may not care to give up their positions and then the challenges in the Arena become quite real. Although it provides great entertainment for the masses, one unfortunate effect is the loss of talented but physically weak administrators.

MINOTAUR JUSTICE

For the minotaurs and all those ruled by them, there is one overriding principle of law—"Might makes right." The strongest is also the one with the legal right. This, known as the rule of might, forms the core of all law. The minotaurs have followed this principle for centuries

and have over time managed to refine this system into a large body of law.

To others, this system would seem impossible and unworkable with bullying brutes slaughtering any who oppose them. It is a credit to the ingenuity of the minotaurs that they have actually created a system that works. To make it work, they have established two absolute precepts—the laws of due process and the Arena.

The first rule, the laws of due process, is that no action can be taken without legal sanction (unless it can be shown that it was violence taken in desperation). If a man kills another in the street during an argument, it is a case of murder. The murderer cannot claim that by successfully killing his opponent he has rightly exercised the rule of might. The killing was done without proper regard for the legal procedure. If a swindled man beats the swindler until his money is returned, he cannot claim the rule of-might, again for the same reason. The swindler can file a claim of battery. (Of course, the other can file a claim of fraud.)



The laws of due process carefully separate violence done in the name of the law from ail other types of violence. This is important, for it prevents anarchy and mob rule in the streets.

To enforce the distinction between proper and improper use of might, the minotaurs have always made use of the Arena. This is the formal courtroom, the place where all cases are tried. Of course, trial in the minotaur sense is vastly different from that held in other countries. For the minotaurs, guilt and innocence are fixed by who wins in the arena. Judges and juries do not debate and decide guilt or innocence. This is decided by skill at arms, strength, and valor. Within the Arena, the plaintiff and defendant are exempted from the consequences of their actions. No legal action can be taken against anyone for the results of an Arena fight, even if the result is accidental, unless the Praetor rules there is Contempt of the Conditions.

The Conditions of Trial are what keep the empire from depopulating itself in bloody lawsuits. Not all battles need be fought to the death and setting the conditions of the combat is part of the legal process. Battles can be fought to the death, first blood, first blow landed, until unconscious, or even until one party is pinned. Indeed, the majority of cases brought to trial are not fought to the death; this penalty is reserved for the most serious capital crimes.

Of course, not just anyone can walk into the Arena and claim the right to fight a case. There are procedures that must be followed before entering the Arena. Only after these have been followed (part of the body of law that defines due process) can the actual trial occur.

The first step is for the case to be filed before a judge, the Praetor. This is known as the Inquiry. Filing can be done by any citizen, but since it involves filing the proper papers, knowing who to bribe, and how to behave before the Praetor, most citizens (or at least those who can afford it) hire a lawyer. Lawyers present arguments pro and con for the validity of the case presented to the Praetor. While they are not trying to prove guilt or innocence (that is left for the Arena), they are trying to show that laws have been broken and that the case is worthy of going to trial.

After hearing their arguments, the Praetor rules on the fitness of the case. He must first decide if any laws have been broken or if any party has sustained any injury (physical, property, or of reputation). If he does find the law has been broken, he then sees if settlement can be reached. No one wants every case to go to trial since the caseload would quickly become unworkable. If at all possible, the Praetor and the citizens (or their lawyers) reach a settlement. This may involve payment of a fine, replacing damaged goods, or a public statement of defeat (an apology in a sense). If necessary, the Praetor can impose a settlement on the two parties, without their agreement. This happens most often when one or both are being stubborn and unreasonable about a minor matter.

If no settlement can be reached, the court begins a new process, the fixing of the Conditions of Combat. This is where lawyers truly earn their pay. The Conditions of Combat establish the rules that will be followed in the Arena. They are reached by a mixture of established law and negotiation. A smart lawyer can tilt the advantage of the combat toward his client or at least prevent the other fellow from getting much of an edge.

There are four conditions that must be set before any combat can occur: Victory, Weapons, Armor, and Champions. After these are decided and fixed in writing, a date is set for the appearance in the Arena.

The first condition, victory, determines what must be done to prove guilt or innocence. In civil cases, combats are rarely fought to the death. Typical victories include first blood, wounding an arm or leg, cutting the horn (if the opponent is a minotaur), unconsciousness, or surrender. This last allows the contestants to fight to whatever extreme they wish; it is often used as a way to withdraw from a case—one person quickly surrenders to the other before any harm can be done.

The law does establish the range of victories allowed for different types of cases. For example, slander is limited to first blood, while theft can only be fought to cripple, at worst. Patricide can only be a fight to the death.

Arms and armor allowed are used to balance out the inequities of the two combatants, reduce the chance of death, and reflect the cruel or unwarranted nature of the case. A human is usually allowed some armor if his opponent is a minotaur and the case is deemed equal. A person who murders an official, however, must fight without weapons or armor, while his opponent is equipped appropriate to the station of the official slain. At the most extreme, a person who assassinates an emperor must fight unarmed and unprotected against a foe wearing magical armor and wielding magical weapons.

Finally there is the issue of champions and this is what makes the minotaur justice system truly work. In most cases, it is not necessary for the actual defendant or plaintiff to risk their own safety. Instead, they can hire someone to represent them in the Arena. This prevents the strongest and most powerful from dominating all others.

The concept of championing comes from the official champions of the government. Certain cases are tried by the government, murder in particular. Since the government is a thing and not a person, it is necessary to have people specially designated to represent the government in the Arena. These are the Imperial Champions. Over the years, this idea of champions has spread to the rest of the people. Powerful nobles did not relish the idea of dying in the Arena over some petty dispute and so applied for the right to use champions. In time, the wealthy merchants bought the right from the Emperor. This set the precedent for extending it to all who could afford it.

Champions are allowed for any type of civil case. It is not necessary for a merchant to enter the Arena when he is accused of selling shoddy goods or overcharging his customers. A carpenter does not have to fight personally because he has a contract dispute with a homeowner. Instead both parties will go out and hire champions. Of course, for some crimes—murder, treason, and any offense against the state—champions for the defendant are not allowed. If a man commits murder, he must personally appear in the Arena.

Of all the champions, there is none greater than the Emperor's Champion. This minotaur or man is more than just a warrior. He is the figurehead of the Emperor's right to rule. As the Emperor's Champion, he enjoys the special protection of his master and few willingly cross him. Underneath him are the Imperial Champions. These are warriors of all races specialized in different weapons and styles of combat. There are experts with the bow, bulky wrestlers, sword masters, and spearmen. Each receives a yearly salary in exchange for being ready to enter the Arena at any time. Like the Emperor's Champion, these warriors enjoy special protection, They are a rough and dangerous lot, paid to risk their lives in one-on-one combat. Normal citizens give them wide berth.

There are more champions however than the official ones maintained by the government. Governors and other high officials find it wise to keep a Personal Champion to defend or prosecute for them in purely civil cases. A wealthy merchant will keep one or more champions to represent himself and his business in the Arena. Successful lawyers maintain stables of champions to represent their clients in the Arena. When a person hires a lawyer he can also choose to pay an additional fee for the services of that lawyer's champion. Clients often shop around to find the lawyer with the champion who has the best record or who has the skills that best suit the case.

Not all lawyers can afford to maintain a selection of highly skilled champions, however. A typical lawyer has perhaps one champion, a general-purpose type of fellow, on his staff. This champion is good for the everyday type of cases the lawyer may handle, but for a serious crime or against high-power talent, the champion would quickly find himself out of his league. In these types of situations, the lawyer would turn to one of the Champions' Guilds found throughout the Empire.

The Champions' Guilds provide the services of legal champions for anyone who is willing to pay. Although the actual functioning of the Guilds varies from place to place, they tend to operate along the same principles. For a fee, the guild offers a selection of warriors. The customer gives a price range he is interested in and the guild provides a listing of registered champions that come within that range. They maintain records of wins and losses, specialties and weaknesses. Using this information the customer can make his choice.

In accepting the fee, the guild promises to ensure the champion appears in the Arena on the appointed time, sober and ready for combat. Of course, the guild must provide an alternate champion should the first become incapacitated or be in less than optimum fighting condition.

To become a champion in a guild, a warrior need only register with the guild and demonstrate fitness for battle. Citizenship is not required. Indeed, having Outlanders fighting in the Arena is tacitly encouraged as a good way to keep them under control and occupied. The warrior may be asked to list any specialties, strengths, and weaknesses he has. He is then placed on probation until he has proven himself. During probation he acts as champion in minor cases, simple and not deadly combats. The guild keeps all his fee at this time. If he does not lose any of these (or if his loss can be attributed to some other circumstance), he advances in the ranks of the guild. The more dangerous the cases he successfully champions, the more in demand he becomes.

Of course the guild always collects and keeps a portion of his fee, although the amount becomes less with his growing fame. It is not uncommon for highly successful champions to leave the guild and found their own stables.

Of course, guilds do more than just connect warriors with clients. The drawing power of a guild is the skill of its

champions, therefore the guilds do all they can to train and improve their men. Guilds provide sword masters, armorers, healers, masseurs, and burial services for free to their champions. Of course, the champion is expected to win. Lose too often and the warrior finds himself on the street. He certainly won't be able find a position with another guild as reputable.

Around the system of champions several other enterprises have sprung up. As the number of champions increased, the best choice of champion for the money became unclear. Professional handicappers track the records of each champion and calculate the best combination of champion, weapon, and armor against a given opponent. Lawyers often use their services to negotiate the best possible trial for their clients.

As ghoulish as the handicappers may seem, even more unsavory types lurk around the arena. Like a sporting event, Arena combats are not above fixing. There are those who make a living fixing (or claiming to fix) the fights. It is a hazardous business, since a suspected fixer must prove his innocence by a personal appearance in the Arena against one of the Imperial Champions (who are reputed to be incorruptible). He also risks the wrath of those who lost because of his fixed fights. Even more bizarre are those who wait around the Arena to collect the dead. Those unclaimed by the guilds or next of kin are spirited away by these macabre phantoms for unknown purposes. It is rumored the bodies are used by wizards for dark purposes.

To show the people that justice is being properly served, Arena combats are open to the public. Thus they also serve the purpose of providing entertainment for the masses. In the cities, the Arena is normally opened once per month although this may be more frequent if the caseload is heavy. Once the docket is set, the cases, the champions, and the Conditions of Combat are posted throughout the city.

Public turnout then depends on the excitement level of the cases. Fights to the death are always good for a crowd, as is any appearance by a major champion even if the Conditions of Combat promise a relatively minor fight. If a defendant or plaintiff voluntarily chooses to appear in the Arena instead of using a champion, public speculation increases (especially if he is facing a hired champion). However, by far the biggest draw is a fight to the death between two professional champions. Professional death fights are uncommon and rarer still are matchups between highly rated champions.

A good Arena Day takes on all the trappings of market fair. Masters release servants for the day. Peddlers line the streets to the Arena, hawking their goods, and food vendors congregate at the entrances to sell fruits, roasted meats, pies, breads, and drinks chilled with ice brought from the mountains. Itinerant wizards put on shows for the public, hoping to collect a bounty of coins for a few hours of simple work. There are jugglers, acrobats, bards, dancers, pick-pockets, and bawds—ail the things that make a festival colorful.

The Arena is built to accommodate these crowds with tiers of seats for the common people and elaborate boxes for the wealthy and titled. As a method of raising revenue, the governor of the province is entitled in the name of the Emperor to charge a tax for each seat. The price of the seat varies with the quality, the most expensive being those closest to the Emperor's or Governor's box and the cheapest being the standing-room-only upper tiers.

To reduce the occasional riots in the stands, men and minotaurs are carefully segregated from each other. Were they seated together, there would certainly be outbreaks during the man vs. minotaur matches. The tensions flare more than enough with the crowd frequently divided into factions supporting different champions.

The action is intense with heavy wagering on the outcome of each trial. For the spectators, the betting is more important than the nature of the trial itself. The same handicappers who advise lawyers now make odds and take bets. Even this betting has formal traditions. The first bets down are made by the plaintiff and defendant and the amount each is willing to bet seriously affects the odds given for each champion. Experienced champions can tell from the crowd's reaction just how the betting is going and whether their clients have any faith in them.

The Praetors (who prepare the docket) are not blind or aloof to the drama of the Arena. Like good showmen, they carefully arrange the docket to build the excitement throughout the day. The initial trials are minor court cases. Depending on the size of the docket, several may be fought at the same time, each battle occurring in a different part of the Arena. As the day goes on, the importance and deadliness of the cases increases and the number of cases fought at a time is reduced. There may be a number of major contests fought early on, to hold the interest of the crowd, but the most exciting case is held till the end of the day. This is not always the most important case from a legal standpoint, but it is the one that has the best crowd appeal—the best champions and the deadliest or the most exotic conditions.

Once ail the contests are finished, the results of the cases are announced and the victorious party is presented with a writ proclaiming his legal rights in the matter at trial. Standing at the side of each man is his champion (if he had one). The losing party is given his terms of punishment before the crowd and is forced to parade around the Arena bearing a sign explaining those terms. In some rare instances, the losing party is executed on the spot, if that is the penalty (although in most such cases, the party would be required to appear in the Arena personally). The justice given out is very severe and is intended to discourage frivolous suits.

THE ARMY OF THE LEAGUE

One of the cornerstones of the Empire is its finely trained and highly efficient military forces. These have provided the might needed by the Emperor to occasionally enforce his will, to protect the empire, and to expand its borders. Without the support of the Legions of Eragas (as the army is known), the Emperor



would be unable to control the far-flung corners of his realm.

The core of the army are the foot soldiers, the legionaries. These men form the largest part of the army. The legionaries are divided in turn into different categories according to the weapons and armor used. The front line of troops are men armed with short sword and shield or long spear and battle-axe. All carry two or three javelins that are thrown just before the enemy makes contact. These troops wear heavy body armor—a breast—plate of bronze bands, a skirt of metal-studded leather strips, greaves, and a helmet. Supporting the heavy infantry are lightly armored bowmen and slingers. These men wear padded or quilted armor at best and carry a short sword in addition to their missile weapons.

However, the foot soldiers are not alone in the army, nor could they alone win all the battles the army has fought. The cavalry has been growing in importance over the years, particularly now that the League has settlements in the Tamire, where the Uigan horsemen rule. Although contact between the two armies has been small, the legionaries have been helpless against the faster, more mobile horsemen. To provide adequate defense, the Legions of Eragas have relied on the protection of fortifications and increasing numbers of cavalry.

League cavalry is of three different types. The most common is light cavalry. These men (and those minotaurs who have learned to be horsemen) ride unbarded horses and wear no armor. They carry a shield, a brace of short javelins, and a sword. In battle, they gallop on the flanks of the enemy, using their javelins to harass him. They do not close with the enemy and use their swords only when forced. Even then, they are likely to dismount and lock their shields for protection.

The second group of cavalry are the Outlanders. Especially since the expansion into Northern Hosk, the League has recruited horsemen from the tribes on its borders. Among the Legions of Eragas are companies of Uigan horsemen, Tumesh riders of the New Mountains, and the Black Woodsmen near Thenol. When properly used, they make excellent scouts and screens for the advancing legions, warning of the approach of the enemy well in advance. These men are wild, difficult to control, and considered unruly by the army commanders. They will go home if dissatisfied or refuse to work if they take a disliking to the way they are treated.

But the finest of the cavalry are the heavy mounted riders. Composed in part of the vain sons of rich noblemen and in the other part of seasoned campaigners chosen for their skill, the heavy cavalry is the shock force of the battlefield. Man and horse are armored in scales of bronze and the rider has the additional protection of a large shield of wood and iron. For weapons he carries several javelins, a lance, battle axe, long sword, and perhaps even a short bow and arrows. The heavy cavalry, the mantari, is not to be wasted in battle. Most often it is the reserve force used to break the enemy and put him into rout with a crucial final charge.

The heavy cavalry is a glamorous arm and always leads the way in the triumphal processions to celebrate the latest victory over the barbarians of the frontier. In wealthy families, if a son must enter the army, every effort is made to secure him a post in the mantari.

The soldiers are organized into groups of ten, then 100, then 500, and then 1,000. The legion, the strategic unit of the army, varies in size according to the need, but normally comprises 1,000 to 5,000 men of all units. (The exact percentages of infantry to cavalry, light to heavy, varies according to need.)

Each legion has a particular identifying symbol and name; within each legion are separate units, each with their own titles, traditions, and history. For example, the Black Horns of Wallbreaker Legion (so named for its reputation in sieges) is one of the most feared units of heavy minotaur infantry.

Most units are divided according to race, in part to prevent difficulties within the unit, but also to best exploit the strengths of that particular race. There are unit of minotaurs, humans, dwarves, and even a small contingent of dark elves. However, one unit, the Black Cloaks of the Legion Imperius, are an exception to this rule. This unit (of 5,000 soldiers) consists of the finest warriors of any race. Taken from their parents (many of whom consider it a great honor) as little children, the Black Cloaks are taught from that point on to surrender their lives for the Emperor.

They receive the finest military training possible, beginning even before other children have stopped sucking their thumbs. They live together, officers and men, recruits and instructors, as a single family. All their needs are seen to, so that

they will never want. They are kept carefully isolated from the politics of the Empire, so as not to pollute their minds.

The end result is a highly-trained legion of soldiers, fanatically loyal to the Emperor. They will do anything he commands of them. So long as the Emperor is threatened they will not surrender or flee—or at least that is what they would have people believe.

Every legion is commanded by a "duces ," a general appointed by the Emperor. This general is never of a social rank lower than the Loyal Families and is more often a minotaur or -iskis. When several legions are grouped under one command, the supreme commander is known by the title Imperator. Again the Imperator is appointed by the Emperor, drawn from the ranks of the dux. He holds the position only for as long as he is needed, after which he returns to the command of his legion.

To reduce the risk of an attempted coup by his generals or his governors, the Emperors have carefully regulated the army. The dux and their legions come under the direct command of the Emperor. The governor of a province has no power of command over the military in his area unless the Emperor issues a specific proclamation empowering him with command. At the same time, the legions are garrisoned in smaller units throughout each province. Only a few legions are garrisoned altogether. These are commanded by the most loyal dux the Emperor can find.

Even with all these precautions, there have been mutinies. Unlike the elaborate process of the Arena, mutineers are judged guilty by their act. The standard practice is to send other army units to crush them. Care is taken to send rivals within the army, if at all possible, to do the job. The risk always exists that the mutiny will spread to other units. Therefore, the most draconian punishments are handed out to mutineers. Normal men are beheaded and their bodies staked along the highways as warnings to others. The leaders are tortured and then publicly drawn and quartered. The parts of their bodies are then sent around to the other garrisons of the Empire as an object lesson.

THE MERCHANTS OF THE LEAGUE

Third in importance to the Emperor and the Legions of Eragas is the League of Merchants. Growing out of the pre-invasion Loyal Families, the Merchant League is a strong guild of traders that regulates and monitors most business trade of the Empire. The Merchant League does not control the production of goods, but it is responsible for the shipping and distribution throughout the Empire and beyond. Its near total monopoly gives it great power within the Empire. Although the guild has no official position, its merchants are able to influence most official policies to its advantage.

The merchant guild also supplies unofficial ambassadors and spies for the Empire. Their trading carries them far beyond the borders of the Imperial League of the Minotaurs. They travel the length of the Tamire, to the land of the goblins, into the Ring Mountains, to Armath and Thenol, even to the dark jungles of Neron. They carry the seeds of the Minotaur Empire with them, making it easier for the Legions of Eragas to annex new territories in the name of the Emperor.

The merchant guild jealously protects its position from all interlopers. Although it is not an officially recognized monopoly, it does not brook any competition. Enterprising merchants who try to set up their own operations are squashed if they are little, driven out of business by the price-cutting practices of the guild. If the newcomer shows a particular talent for the business (i.e., he survives the attempts to drive him out of business), an invitation is extended to him to join the guild. If he refuses this, driving him out of business gets serious. Threats, beatings, arson, even killing will be used if necessary. Given this type of attitude, the League of Merchants has few competitors.

RELIGIONS

Religion has never played an important part in the lives of the minotaurs of Taladas and is even less so now that the power of the gods is no longer apparent to them. For the most part they believe in the power and might of the individual. Nor, by their culture, will they willingly submit or admit inferiority to another—including the gods of Krynn. Thus they have little use for organized religions and the trappings that go with them.

Over the years, the humans too have lost much of their faith. With the Great Trek, many came to believe the gods had forsaken or cursed them. If this were so, then they had no use for such cruel and capricious gods. Denied the powers granted by the gods, they denied the gods entirely.

In the centuries that have passed, little has changed to alter this view. Indeed, the atheism of the minotaurs has reinforced the views of the humans. Because of this there are no large temples or state religions in the Empire.

Of course, faith is not entirely absent from the Empire. A practical-minded people, the citizens preserve their dead on the chance that the gods will return and restore the dead. There are no cults native to the Empire, but the beliefs of Outlanders have entered into the society. Thus there are small followings for such gods as the Uigan Mislaxa, Qu'uan, and Jijin. The beliefs of Thenol and Armach have recently started to appear among the common people. And of course, Hiteh has not ignored the opportunity for mischief. Particularly in such places as the Old City of Kristophan, he has prompted the creation of cults to follow him. These have remained secret, as Hiteh does not care to bring attention to his followers and their evil activities just yet.

THE CITIES OF THE LEAGUE

By far the crowning glory of the Empire is the Five Great Cities. In the minds of many citizens, the Five Great Cities are the Empire. The farmland and the Outer Provinces are only small backwaters of the cities. But which city is the greatest of the five is open to endless argument. A minotaur of Kristophan will refuse to believe any other place is greater. A man of Thera will extol the wonders of the pleasure gardens of his home. In truth each has its own character, different from the others.

Kristophan

As the seat of the Empire, Kristophan's claim to greatness is clear and obvious. Here is where the Emperor rules, the Senate meets, and the Imperial Arena stands. Kristophan is the center of all government throughout the Empire. Every soul seeking political appointment is drawn here. Every minotaur household of consequence and every Loyal Family lives here close to the Emperor.

In terms of raw power, no other city of the Empire can rival Kristophan. It rightly boasts the finest champions, the most skillful lawyers, the most spectacular buildings, and the largest population. It is gaudy, ostentatious, and domineering in its displays of power.

It is not, however, a beautiful city. Built around the old human settlement, the capital is divided into three districts: the Old City, the New City, and the Imperial City.

The Old City district centers around the original human town of Kristophan and the neighborhoods immediately around it. The buildings here are older than anywhere else in the city. Most of the buildings are of two storeys and built of wood, except for the Old Armory and the Forest Gate that, though no taller than the rest, are all that is left of the stone fortifications that defended the town from land- based attacks. Most of the walls have long since been torn down, and the stone carted off to build the Imperial City. Fire, especially during dry summers, is the greatest danger to the inhabitants. Disease is a close second, for the narrow, twisting streets are muddy with sewage and the buildings are infested with rats.

Once the heart of Kristophan, the Old City is now a gloomy and dangerous ghetto. The majority of those who live here are humans, elves, and dwarves. Few minotaurs dwell in the Old City, preferring the company of their own kind in the New City. The majority of inhabitants are also poor and unskilled, making their meager livings at hard labor. At dawn they leave their homes to work elsewhere, returning at dusk to their bleak and dreary homes. Although their entertainments are not grand, they go at them withgreat gusto. There are numerous cheap taverns, tea shops, coffee stalls, houses of ill-repute, gambling halls, and smoking dens.

These are the meeting places of highlawyers (bandits), versers (card cheats), nips (cutpurses), foins (pickpockets), rufflers (muggers), charms (lockpickers), jackmen (forgers), and anglers (burglars). These gather into informal fraternities led by an upright man, a thief and cozener of such skill and authority that the others defer to him out of respect and fear.

The company will take orders from their upright man, milling the gentry cove's ken (robbing the wealthy houses) and spying out the conies (marks) for the crooked games. Although they speak the tongue of the Empire, these men fill it with words of new meaning, hiding their trades, tools, and targets behind these expressions. Each gang has its own laws, customs, and territories, which are normally respected and honored by others of their kind. However this is not always the case and sometimes bloody feuds break out between different gangs.

When this happens, the upright men turn to others for help, particularly the disreputable and fallen champions that fill the taverns. These men are always willing to risk death for money and so provide a ready source of muscle for any job at hand. The taverns they frequent are rough places, for although a champion may only want a quiet drink, his combative nature seldom lets him leave well enough alone. The back streets of the Old City have always been a good place to hire desperate men for a desperate task.

Given the rough and dangerous nature of the Old City, it is not surprising that the city watch, the saiones, tend to leave that part of town to its own devices. They tend not to be concerned about the crimes committed within the Old City, unless they are of exceptional infamy. The greatest reason for them to enter is when a crime is committed outside the boundaries of the Old City, particularly if the crime was committed in the Imperial City. At such times, the saiones enter the district in force.

Their methods are not subtle and they are unloved by most of the inhabitants therein. In times of extreme emergency, such as the frequent summer riots or a rare imperial assassination, the Legions of Eragas join the saiones in their peacekeeping duties. The army is even more brutal than the saiones and the rumor of their deployment can trigger bloody riots of protest.

Of course, the Old City is not all bleakness and decay. There are many things that make it lively and exciting, an attractive adventure for the wealthy to visit—by day. There are the colorful open-air markets. Plays, bear- baiting, cockfights, puppet theaters, dog fights, and staged duels all provide popular entertainment. But with the coming of dusk, the markets close down and the wise go back to their homes.

Another feature of the Old City is the small enclaves of wealth. Hidden away down back alleys, carefully concealed from notice, may be the private apartments of a powerful wizard or the rooms maintained by a powerful noble for his illicit mistress. Of course, few openly display their wealth in a community filled with thieves.

Only the most successful and powerful of the upright men can freely show their wealth. These men, the dons of the criminal community, disdain from showing fear of robbery and with good reason. Most Old City inhabitants know that to rob such a man is to invite sure death.



Not only is his home likely to be well guarded and fitted with dangerous traps, he also has a network of informers and killers to carry out his wishes. More than once the hand of a foolish thief has been found nailed to the door of his favorite tavern, an example to all others who might follow in his footsteps.

Almost forgotten on the edge of the Old City are the Tombs, catacombs dating from the first settlement of Kristophan. These are unused now, the dead being buried in the necropolis outside of town, but the catacombs have never been filled in. The underground caverns, once cool and dry, have become dank and clammy over the years. The bodies once buried there have decayed long since into crumbling gravemold. More recently deceased are left there by assassins, hiding their crimes. The air is thick with decay and rot and only the homeless, seeking shelter from fierce storms, and fugitives from justice or wrath choose to go there.

Surrounding the Old City is the New City. This section of Kristophan was built after its conquest by the minotaurs and reflects their tastes and skills in architecture. Most of the buildings are low, of one or two storeys, and built of brick. Only a few stone or wood buildings exist; stone is reserved for the Imperial City and the forests were long ago depleted during the building of the Old City. The better part of the docks and quays of Kristophan are found in the New City, built by the minotaurs for the great ocean fleets.

The preferences of the minotaurs are also reflected in the layout of the New City. There is no orderly pattern to the arrangement of streets. Avenues, alleys, and lanes twist and turn almost randomly, making the New City a dense maze of buildings. Apparently the minotaurs seem to like things this way, for most other cities of the Empire follow suit. Others (particularly the dwarves) find the system maddening and frustrating.

As a concession to the sensibilities of non-minotaurs, the New City is pierced by several straight boulevards that run from one major landmark to another. The Breakwater runs from the docks to the Old City. The Emperor's March crosses the New City from the Imperial City to the Old City. The Highroad goes from the Plaza of Champions to the Great Way, the major road leading from Kristophan to Moldar.

Major businesses line these streets, to save customers from trying to find their way among the confusing lanes of the inner blocks of the New City. Each boulevard attracts merchants appropriate to its nature. The Breakwater is lined with the warehouses of the League of Merchants. At the seaward end are the shipchandlers, provisioners, and sailmakers. Near the Old City there are taverns and grocers.

Along the Emperor's March are the different Champions' Guilds, dealers in antiquities, sellers of rare cloth, goldsmiths, jewelers, and seamstresses.

At the farthest end of the Highroad, where it becomes the Great Way, are inns, stables, horse dealers, farriers, cartwrights, wheelwrights, and grain dealers. Nearer the Plaza of Champions (which is not far from the Imperial Arena) are the city's armorers, swordsmiths, trainers, surgeons, and doctors. A few of the Champions' Guilds can be found in this area.

The bulk of the New City, however, is made up of the twisting lanes that run between the main boulevards. Here live the greatest part of the people of Kristophan. These are the homes of craftsmen, merchants, and minotaurs. On these streets can be found ship captains, carpenters, importers, respected champions, lawyers, clerks, scribes, shopkeepers, hostelers, and more. They do their best to live their lives peacefully and without fuss. Unlike the Old City, the New City is regularly patrolled by the saiones, who are generally respected and liked by the citizens there.

The typical home in the New City is a small villa built around a central courtyard. At the gate may be a storefront where the owner displays his goods or crafts for sale. Inside is the courtyard, perhaps decorated with a few trees (and for the well-to-do, a private well). This is typically paved for appearances and the ease of carts. Surrounding this courtyard are the rooms of the house, facing inward. Poorer citizens, nearer the Old City, make do with single-storey homes or share their houses between several families. Wealthy families have two-storey villas and may even have attached gardens enclosed by a separate wall.

Within a wealthy villa will be more than just the family. Also living there, in separate quarters, are free servants and household slaves. There will be grooms, cooks, maids, and various assistants all to see to the needs of the family. Although there may be minotaur servants, it is against the law to keep minotaur slaves, except for those being punished for imperial crimes. Such prisoners are never

given positions as household servants, serving their sentences in quarries, mines, farms, and on board galleys.

The citizens of the New City are perfectly aware of what tempting targets they make to the thieves of the Old City, and they take appropriate precautions. Villas and homes are built with no outside windows, all views looking into the courtyard or gardens. Gates are barred at night. Everyone who can afford it has a gatekeeper, a warrior, to keep watch at night. Guard dogs are loosed into courtyards or, more exotically, cheetahs are released into the gardens. The rich hire bodyguards to stand watch, although they do not approach the scale of the private armies the noblemen maintain.

Finally, there is the expedient of buying off the thieves. It is a common practice for powerful upright men to collect protection money from the homeowners of the New City. These upright men then place their "mark" at the doors of the villas to show that they are protected and who protects them. While the marks are supposedly secret, anyone willing to go to a little effort could learn them. Some misers have attempted to use counterfeit marks only to have their homes ransacked at the orders of the indignant upright man. As a result, counterfeiting marks is a seldom- tried practice.

The most isolated and secure section of Kristophan is the Imperial City. Nestled in the center of the New City, this is separated from all else by the Dux's or Generals' Wall. This wall not only keeps the common people out of the Imperial grounds, it also serves as the final line of defense for the city. It is not a ceremonial or decorative wall but a solid and well-manned fortification.

Entrance into the Imperial City is through one of only four gates: The Emperor's Gate, through which passes the Emperor's March; The Oceangate, the one closest to the sea; The Wood Gate, which faces inland; and The Bloody Gate, where the bodies of traitors are displayed after death in the Arena.

During the daytime, citizens are allowed to pass through the gates, but at night they are closed to all. Furthermore, citizens of the Old and New City must leave before the gates are closed or be arrested for breaking the curfew. Only those bearing a pass, issued by the Office of the Chamberlain of the Imperial City, can legally remain within the walls after dark.

Of course, there are those willing to take the risk of discovery. The Imperial City is the richest picking ground for thieves—and also the most dangerous. Here the saiones is particularly active, patrolling the streets and guarding public buildings day and night. In addition, the Dux's Wall is manned by the Black Cloaks of the Legion Imperius, the Emperor's elite bodyguard. These soldiers attack to kill anything or anyone who attempts to cross the wall. The first great task for any thief is just to get into the Imperial City unnoticed.

Once inside, things do not become any easier. The noble villas, larger and more lavish versions of those found in the New City, are also better and more dangerously protected. Instead of a mere gate guard or handful of watchmen, nobles keep up to 200 guards patrolling their grounds, led by their personal champions. Like the Black Cloaks, most of these guards attack without question, seeking to kill any intruder. Most nobles maintain one or more wizards on their staff and part of their duties are to use their spells to prepare magical traps. A few have even employed master thieves to act as advisors for preparing precautions, although this is risky, given the chance the master thief will decide to use his knowledge against his master.

Within the Imperial City are more than just the villas of the nobles. Contained within the walls are most of the functions of the Empire. At the far end of the Emperor's March is the Imperial Palace, home of the Emperor (although he spends most of his time at Thera). Adjoining this is the Queens' Palace, where his wives live when he is present. Adjoined to these two palaces are the barracks of the Black Cloaks, the Emperor's bodyguard. Radiating out from this are the palaces of the other great households of the Imperial Family.

At the edge of the palaces, forming a border between the nobles' villas and the palaces, are the Ministries, the bureaucracies that make the Empire go. The Imperial Senate is part of this ring of ministries, flanking the Emperor's March to the left. To the right stands the Imperial Treasury. Beneath it are the secretly tunnelled vaults holding the riches of the Empire. Short of the Emperor's Palace, no building is more heavily guarded than this.

Also among the ministries are the barracks of the rest of the Legion Imperius, the most trusted and best equipped of all the Emperor's troops. Their placement here is intentional, as a protection from the ambitions of the nobles. Of course, there is no guarantee that the Legion Imperius will remain loyal, so the Emperor carefully monitors it at all times.

Outside the city are two other areas of importance. About two leagues away is the vast necropolis of Kristophan. Here the dead are entombed to await the return of the gods. Early minotaur custom was to cremate their dead. After conquering the Styrllians, however, they adopted the practice of entombment. Those who can afford it pay for sturdy mausoleums to house their dead, in the belief that when the gods return those who have been worthy shall be restored to life. (This belief is unique to the lands of Styrllia and its conquests; it is preached, in one form or another, by all the temples of the city.)

Some of the tombs are quite old, dating from the time of the human settlement. For centuries the necropolis was a popular site for a day trip, enlivened by the old tales of the undead things that might be lurking below. In the absence of priestly powers, these were little more than stories. Recently, however, unwholesome things have been stirring there. Cultists of Hiteh are rumored to hold ceremonies among the tombs in the dead of night. Fewer and fewer picnickers choose the shaded glens and lonely retreats once so popular with lovers.

The second place outside the city is the Encampment. Located five miles from the outer city wall, this is a permanent

barracks for the Bearkiller Legion and the Marines. These legions, the greater part of the Emperor's elite troops, are stationed here as the strategic reserve of the army. It just so happens that they are close by to deal with difficulties in Kristophan itself. The two legions together maintain about 8,000 soldiers in readiness for combat. Portions of these legions are frequently sent to deal with disturbances elsewhere, so it is rare for all 8,000 to be available at once.

Thera

Where Kristophan radiates power and might, Thera gives the feeling of sophistication and relaxation. Nestled in the hills of Eragalla, Thera is the playground of the wealthy. Not on any major trade route and far from the centers of power, Thera has gained its fame as the summer resort of the nobility. It is blessed with numerous medicinal hot springs. However, hot springs alone would not have been enough to distinguish it. Thera is also blessed with rich, cool forests providing both scenery and comfort. This combination of hot baths, cool weather, and scenery has made Thera the place to go during the hot season.

Where most cities grow in size from year to year, Thera's population fluctuates wildly depending on the season. During the winter it is a small, sleepy city. Deep, gently-falling snows close it down, cut off from the outside world. Those who remain are the citizens who make their homes there year round, the craftsmen needed to build and maintain the villas, the innkeepers who provide rooms for the lesser entourage that follows the nobles wherever they go, the provisioners, the grocers, and the laborers. Of the summer people, the only ones who remain are the caretakers and guards for the great villas. This is still no small number, for the places, such as the Imperial summer villa, cannot be left casually unguarded. During the cold months there is still a complete garrison, servants, craftsmen, painters, gardeners, cooks, and scribes, all under the command of chamberlains and stewards.

With the coming of spring this all changes. As the snow- blocked roads clear, the advance guard of the summer season begins to filter in. First to arrive are the heralds and trusted servants. Their task is to inspect the villas, begin the preparations for the summer, and (to the terror of those who have stayed all year) send back reports on the activities of the winter caretakers.

After them come the household servants accompanying the baggage of their masters and mistresses. Then comes the rush of courtiers and supplicants, scurrying and jockeying for suitable rooms from the innkeepers of the city. At last comes the final wave, the summer residents. Each year on the third moon of spring, the Emperor and his household—wives, children, secretaries, undersecretaries, valets, and ladies-in-waiting—arrive, surrounded by the Black Cloaks and a throng of hopeful hangers-on. The minotaur nobles, the iskis, and the Loyal Families arrive immediately after and in no time at all the city is filled to beyond bulging.

Thera naturally divides into two sections, the city and the villas. This division was not intentional but was an outgrowth of the increasing number of summer visitors. The city, built first, clusters around a group of hot springs near the floor of the valley where Thera is nestled. These springs were the easiest to reach when the first settlers arrived.

The city now sprawls across the narrow valley floor, the oldest parts around the hot springs with newer buildings farther and farther away. A public bath house has been built over the old hot springs. It opens onto the Forum or main square, the heart of Thera. Facing the baths from across the Forum is the Basilica, the seat of the city government. Here the Praetors and lawyers gather to deal with the cases of the day.

To the right of this, between the Basilica and the baths, stands the Arena. Compared to the majesty of the Imperial Arena of Kristophan, this seems a modest affair—but Thera has always been more attuned to the relaxation and leisure of the baths, not the blood and anger of the Arena.

To the left of the Basilica, forming the final side of the Forum, is the Palaestra, the public gymnasium. Here the citizens of Thera indulge in their second great passion —sports. Daily, youths come to wrestle or challenge each other in the javelin. Less bloody-minded than the Arena, the gymnasium is popular with summer visitors seeking a little diversion from the bubbling springs and grand vistas. As is their habit in Thera, spectators bet vigorously on these contests, just as they bet heavily at the Arena. Scouts from the Champions' Guilds watch the exercises, always on the lookout for a likely recruit.

In the streets surrounding the square are wine shops, street-side cafes, smoky taverns, bakeries, cheese shops, fruit and nut sellers, and oil vendors. Farther away from the center are the homes of the craftsmen—cabinet-makers, marble-workers, tilers, dyers, mosaicists, gem-cutters, weavers, cleaners, tinkers, and more. Outside the gates are hawkers peddling melons, rib bon, sulphur matches, grapes, charms, sandals, wild animals, caps, fish, and smoked meats. Wandering through the streets, going from door-to-door, are bards, acrobats, fortune- tellers, jugglers, and bear-tamers. Thieves often disguise themselves as these wanderers, perhaps even making a modest living at some honest art, so they can case potential victims for return visits later in the night.

Running from the Forum toward the hills is the main street of the city. Unlike the streets of many other cities, this runs straight and true. It passes through the low city wall and then winds its way through the villas on the slopes until it reaches the outermost gate of the Imperial Villas. Although the villas were once outside the walls of the city, today they are extensions of the city wall. Each villa has its own walls and many of these join at various points to each other and eventually to the city walls. Thus the defensive walls of the city are a jumble of separate walls and gates.

Once, when Thera was much younger, there was a need for strong defenses to protect the inhabitants from the savage



creatures and peoples of the wooded hills. Now the area is civilized and peaceful. The tribes that lived in the area have been conquered or have moved away. The dangerous animals, hunted for sport, avoid men and minotaurs whenever possible. With the passing of these threats, the city walls have become more symbolic than functional, marking the boundary between the citizens of Thera and the summer people. Villa walls, however, are strong and well-maintained. Their owners value their privacy and security. While riots of the citizens or the poor are rare in Thera, political plotting and assassination is not. More than once a scheming or enraged noble has sent his private guards on a raid to storm the villa of a rival.

Of course,' the Emperor cannot allow such behavior to go unchallenged. Just within the gates of the Imperial Villas are barracks for the Legion Imperius and the Black Cloaks. Should report come of armed men on the march, troops are instantly dispatched to the scene. Normally it can be figured that once or twice a season the guard will be called to deal with raiders. Fortunately, most of these are easily contained. Sometimes though, before things can be brought under control, the skirmish spreads throughout several villas as others throw their support to one side or the other.

Each villa is more than just a summer home. It is like a private community. Within the grounds are a main house, often with wings for the wives and courtiers. In addition there may be separate guest houses, gardens, viewing ponds, fisheries, orchards, servants' cottages, barracks, granaries, stables, temples, and slaves' quarters. There is almost always a hot spring and bathhouse on the property (this being the main attraction of Thera). Some villas, such as the Imperial Villas, are built with more than just leisure in mind. These places are small fortresses, ready to provide a haven should life elsewhere become too dangerous. These villas, sited not just for their hot springs and vistas, are hard to reach and are built strong enough to withstand sieges, Incorporated into their design may be watchtowers, secret gates, moats, and keeps. (Just because the Empire is cultured doesn't mean it is safe.)

Aside from violence, another problem of Thera is the infrequent earthquakes. Aware of this danger, architects seldom build higher than one storey. Stone and brick, which are the common building materials throughout the rest of the Empire, have proven too inflexible for use here. Wood is the favored material both in the city and among the villas. However, it is seldom left plain, for simplicity has never been to the taste of the minotaurs. Buildings are lavished with carvings and statuary. Beams are carved and painted in polychromatic colors. Wooden panels are painted according to the whim of the owner—hunting scenes, landscapes, tales of heroes, and amorous scenes of the boudoir are all scenes of choice.

Wood, in turn, leads to the danger of fire. More than once disastrous fires have swept through the closely packed streets of Thera, all but eradicating the city. Each time, the Therans have stubbornly rebuilt their homes and started over.

Because their science is not up to it, the Therans do not realize the scope of the danger earthquakes present. The hills and hot springs that have made the area so attractive are also signs of a major fault that runs almost directly under the city. To date, even the most destructive tremors that have shaken the town are small compared to the major quake that is building. Each year pressure increases on the fault and minor shocks ripple through the city. These do little to relieve the immense strain underground. Sometime soon there will come an earthquake that will irrevocably shatter the city.

However, the danger has not gone totally unheeded. As noted, the science of earthquakes and faults is not up to understanding the exact dangers building. However, those accustomed to the earth, particularly dwarves, have noted the frequency of quakes and their severity. These and other telltales—the hot springs, for one—make them concerned. To their minds, Thera is not sited wisely. Most, recognizing the futility of changing things, merely note their reservations and move away. Some feel compelled to give quiet warning and then move away.

A few zealously take up the cry of danger, warning anyone who will listen. Although they try earnestly, they are universally regarded as fanatics and crackpots. Denied legitimacy by the magical, religious, and scientific community, the doomsayers haunt the Forum, gates, and taverns of Thera. Here they do what they can, preaching the truth. The laughter and mockery endured has pushed more than one beyond fanaticism and into madness.

ARMACH

Resting in the broad valleys south and west of the New Mountains is the small country of Armach, ruled by the Silvanaes-Quarti, the Lost Silvanesti of Ansalon. Blown off course from the Great Armada that set sail around Ansalon, the Silvanaes-Quarti (or Silvanaes, as they call themselves) were driven to Taladas. Storm-shattered, they beat against the wind and waves to find some safe harbor. Several ships were crushed against the rocky cliffs as they worked their way up and down the coast, until finally, with the aid of an adrift fisherman they had rescued from the sea, they sailed the secret ways through the treacherous shoals of the Outer Banks to reach landfall in the Bay of Hoor. Here they came ashore. Asking the blessing of the landspirits, the Silvanaes called the land Armach, Dryland.

What they found in their new land of Armach was a disorganized collection of petty tribes. The Silvanaes were amazed at what they considered the primitive state of the locals. They were accustomed to the grand cities of Ansalon and the glorious history of their own people and the human empires. Here they found people living at a level of barbarism almost beyond their imagining. In Ansalon, the only creatures who lived such lives were dark and evil. Humans, elves, even kender had advanced past this barbaric state.

Thus, the Silvanaes at first saw the natives as evil and dangerous and set about carving their own homeland. Fighting quickly broke out between the natives and the elves, based on these misunderstandings and confusions. However, the superior equipment and training of the Silvanaes quickly carried the day in such battles. Within a little time, the elves had established themselves as masters of the Hoor Bay basin.

In setting up their new homeland, the elves did not seek to conquer and rule the natives. Instead they drove the humans away, attempting to set up an empire of elves only, just as they had in Silvanesti. At first they were easily successful, attacking the humans and seizing their properties. As their own land expanded, the task became more and more difficult. The elven warriors were few in number and quickly reached the limit of what they could defend. The tribes became larger and stronger, as the refugees from the elf lands joined with the natives on the borders. Eventually growth of the elven lands came to a halt.

Here the situation would have remained had it not been for the superior culture of the Silvanaes. The humans, unable to overcome the better-trained elves, eventually turned on each other. Those astute leaders who shared borders with the elves turned to the Silvanaes. Alliances were made and the culture of the elves gradually spread. Although the leaders were only interested in the elvish arts of war, it was not long before other aspects of elvish culture became sought after.

As a result of this process, the Confederation of Armach was created and solidified to the state it has reached today. As befits its foreign origins, it is different from any other nation of Taladas.

THE PEOPLE AND SOCIETY

Armach is divided between two distinct groups— the elves and the humans. There is occasionally cross-breeding, but half-elves are rare and not well-received.

The Silvanaes of Armach are the survivors and direct descendants of the Grand Armada. In the few years that they have been here (by their standards) they have changed little. Like the Silvanesti of Ansalon, they are slender with finely shaped features. Their average height is slightly shorter than that of a human's

Men commonly dress in long robes, embroidered and decorated in bright woodland colors, when in city or town. In the woodlands, typical clothing is a jerkin and trousers of muted browns and greens. Belts and scabbards are made of finely tooled leathers, often dyed and varnished in elaborate patterns. While finely-wrought pieces of gold and silver jewelry are the preferred ornaments, most of these are heirlooms since the Silvanaes no longer have the contacts to the dwarven smiths they once had in Ansalon.

New decorative pieces—pins, buttons, toggles, combs, and necklaces—are more often than not made of wood. Such pieces may be intricately carved—a jacket toggle consisting of a ball of heartwood trapped within an unbroken pierced filigree cage carved from the same piece; a man's snuff box with elaborate moving pieces that must be slid, pressed, and twisted before the box will open; a comb

with flame-cut teeth made from the ironwood tree; or a mirror-locket made by polishing the purest beech until it shows a reflection, then hung by a slender chain of carved wood.

The humans of the Hoor region all come from the same bloodstock, thus there are no strong distinguishing characteristics from one tribe to another. All have black to brown skin tones with black hair. Their eyes are dark and the pupils tend to be large. Both men and women have prominent cheekbones. Men tend to have broad foreheads and decidedly square jaws, while the women have faces that are much more pointed. Women also tend to be heavier-boned than the men although the men are more muscular. The Hoor people are taller than average, standing about 5′ 10″ tall or more.

When first encountered by the elves, the people of Hoor wore simple tribal costumes. Each tribe could be identified by the colors and patterns of clothing worn, although the basic dress was the same throughout the area. When the weather was warm (most of the year), the man's costume was a simple vest and baggy pants, tied at the waist with a colored sash. When hunting, men wore only a loincloth or went naked, painting their bodies with colored muds and dyes to blend into the terrain. Women wore large sashes, one tied about the bodice and others tied to form a skirt. An unmarried woman covered her head and shoulders with a heavy shawl, hiding her face behind a veil. Again a brightly-colored sash completed the outfit. Commoners were normally barefoot, while town-dwellers and the upper class people wore hard leather sandals or soft slippers. In cold weather, sheepskin coats were worn for warmth.

Although elven dress has not replaced the traditional garb, it is often imitated. Workers in the field and those who do hard labor still favor traditional clothing (which is better-suited to working). Although many hunters still go naked, more and more are favoring soft leather trousers in the elven fashion. The greatest changes have occurred among the well-bred and townspeople. In imitation of the superior elves, they have begun to wear belted robes. However, traditional decorations and colors are still used for these robes and the tooled leather belt has been replaced by the bright tribal sash. Elvish style moccasins and boots have also come more into favor. However, the elven taste for decorative items has not been popular. The humans of Armath consider displays of wealth (such as jewelry) to be offensive to the gods, whom they think still observe their lives.

In battle, the elvish dress and weaponry is favored. The typical warrior, one of no great means, is a light infantryman. He wears a tunic of thickly quilted leather but no helmet. He carries a small shield, long sword or spear, and a bow either short or long, according to his taste. He may also have a variety of small weapons—a dagger or hand axe are most common—that are useful while on campaign. Each man carries his own kit on his back or in a bundle slung around his shoulder. This is of course left in camp during a battle. The army is entirely infantry, cavalry being unknown to these people.

Socially, the people of the confederation are also divided by race. The elves form the ruling class, although their direct power is limited to the Armach-nesti, the Land of the People. Their influence over the other tribes is limited to their diplomatic skills (which are considerable), their advisors (which every tribe has), and their advantage in trade. They use their skills to maintain dominance over the other members of the confederation, but, with the exception of the First Edicts, they have avoided abusing their power.

The Silvanaes are themselves divided into two factions. These are divided by their occupations and outlooks on life, but not by their social standing.

The first group is the Nestiroml, the People Workers, made up of the sailors, mates, captains, craftsmen, and their families—the actual laborers of the fleet. They are held in high esteem for the courageous service they performed in bringing the fleet safely to shore. Now their members in council are noted for their pragmatic view of matters. They are concerned with knowing how, organizing the effort, and seeing projects through. From their ranks come many of the administrators, captains, and generals of the Confederation; those who have a will to get things accomplished.

The second faction is the Neskijir, the Robed People. Formed from the passengers of the fleet—the scholars, artists, heralds, squires, knights, and princes—these people are honored as the keepers and protectors of the Silvanesti tradition. This is no small task. The elves have always jealously protected their way of life and the Silvanaes, alone in a strange



world, are fanatical in this regard. The task of preserving their old way of life is a solemn duty, a role the Neskijir take seriously.

From their ranks come the leaders, councillors, judges, and speakers. Under their guidance laws are written, ambassadors are sent out, and the Confederation is governed. The Neskijir like to see themselves as wise and benevolent, and to most observers they are exactly that. Faced by barbarians, they have stressed the nobler and more ideal codes of conduct. However, they are not as perfect as they seem, especially considering that they were the authors of the First Edicts.

For the rest of the Confederation, the type of society varies according to the kingdom or tribe. In general most follow the basic pattern of a hereditary ruling class and then various divisions of social classes underneath this. Some of the kingdoms practice "benevolent" slavery—convicts, debtors, and hereditary slaves—while others traditionally forbid it within their realms. In addition, there is a sub-culture that has arisen around the Confederacy itself, centered at the Council Town, Bok.

Here the society that centers around the elves is much more class-oriented. Although each tribe originally had minor differences, they all tended to divide into classes based on birth. At the top were those born into the nobility or ruling class. This class was closed to all others. A brilliant peasant could never hope to become one of the rulers of a tribe.

Under them were those born into wealth, but not of the ruling class. These included powerful landowners, merchants, and moneylenders. After this came the families of craftsmen. A son born of a carpenter learned the trade of carpentry. These families jealously protected their dominance of the crafts, but a peasant could hope to become an artisan if he were adopted by such a family.

The small landowners came next. Here, however, was a class a lowly peasant could someday hope to attain should he ever have the opportunity to start a homestead of his own. Finally there was the peasantry, laborers who owned no lands but worked the property of others in exchange for a portion of the crop. They were not slaves (slavery being unknown to these people) but they were not free to do as they pleased either.

Since the founding of the confederation, the elves have attempted to change this structure. Recognizing that talent is not confined to. a particular class, the elves have instituted a system of examination and review to fill the posts in the administrative bureaucracy of the Confederation. These examinations are open to anyone who has the necessary training in the basic skills of reading and writing, which effectively reduces the potential applicants to a workable number.

Each year, just before the High Summer Day, the exams are given and the applicants are placed according to their performance. Currently the idea is still new to the people of the Confederation and so a dual system exists, one where status is determined by birth and another where it is fixed by skill. Those claiming birthright have a longer tradition than the examined and so frequently look down on their peers who have attained their posts through placement.

THE CONFEDERATION

The Confederation of Armach is technically formed by treaties of alliance between the Silvanaes and 16 tribes that are found on their borders. Thirteen of these tribes are human-based. One is a group of dissident Marak kender, one is gnomish, and the sixteenth is a tribe-herd of centaurs. Altogether, these people make up the Confederation.

As indicated by its name, the Confederation is not a nation of a single people (as the Uigan), a country united under a single ruler (as in Thenol), or even a bureaucratic government with appointed leaders carrying out the wishes of a governing body. It is collection of independent governments (petty kingdoms, principalities, dukedoms, and manors) that meet to settle disputes and to act on issues that threaten them all. Thus, the Confederation's power is strictly limited.

The greatest limitation on the power of the Confederation is that it is not supposed to interfere in the internal affairs of any ally. Thus, although the elves disapprove of slavery, they cannot ban it throughout the Confederation. They cannot insist that taxes be applied equally to all inhabitants of the Confederation. If one kingdom chooses to exempt certain peoples from taxation (hoping to lure merchants into its borders), it can do so, although this may bring protests from the other lands that it is unfairly hurting them.

The Confederation cannot raise a separate army, and is limited instead to issuing a call to arms. Each kingdom is then supposed to provide a company or more of men. The number and type of soldiers provided is supposedly set by treaty.

The Confederation does have important duties. It is responsible for keeping peace between members. Disputes are brought before the Magisterial Council, a select group of jurists, for hearing and judgment. Only the Confederation can approve armed action by one member state against another (most often to suppress an attempt to secede). The Confederation approves the extradition of fugitives from one land to another. It allocates the tax burden among the kingdoms, the money used for public works (roads and bridges), and the maintenance of a merchant fleet, which no single kingdom could otherwise afford.

It alone is allowed to negotiate with foreign powers—particularly the League and Thenol. Any separate kingdom that enters into negotiations is guilty of high treason to the Confederation if discovered. Finally, the Confederation approves the claim of any successor to a throne. While this is mostly a formality, it must sometimes to used to prevent civil war over a disputed throne. Stability and continuity are more important than absolute justice (in this particular case).

The Confederation meets in full council twice per year, although it can be called for an emergency session at any time. The day-to-day business of the Confederation is handled by the Cabinet when the council is not in session. The

Cabinet has five members: the Chancellor of Nations (the head of the council), Steward of the Treasury (the controller of the Confederation's funds), Grand Knight of the Realm (commander-in-chief of all military expeditions), First Justicar (head of the Magisterial Council), and the Prince of Armach-nesti (the leader of the elves).

Of these five, the first four are appointed by the full Council. Their terms of service are indefinite—they hold their offices until they die or the Council votes to remove them. The Prince's presence is automatic, an insurance that there will always be at least one elven representative in the Cabinet, although there are usually more.

To carry out the decisions of the Cabinet, each member has a staff of aides, secretaries, scribes, inspectors, and couriers. In short, each commands a bureaucratic arm of the government. This gives them even more power, for not only do they make many of the decisions of Armach, but they are also responsible for seeing that all decisions are carried out.

In the weeks prior to council, there is a great deal of behind-the-scenes politicking. In every session at least one nation will have some complaint with another. Zendas is excessively taxing the caravans of Hoorbay that pass through on their way to the Centaurs. In retaliation, Hoorbay is exiling its criminals to Zendas, giving the Zendarians a new headache. Tallmark has granted asylum to Arnhold, the False Prince of Vesterlund, a man who attempted to overthrow the current King of Vesterlund.

There are also emissaries from foreign lands, Thenol and the League particularly, who must be heard, debated about, and replies drafted for. There are reports from ambassadors and scouts to be considered. In some of the fiercest debates, there are taxes to be assessed and quotas of soldiers for service to be assigned. These debates, negotiations, and votes last several weeks each session. During that time, the council site is the most important place in all of Armach.

Council is always held in the city of Bok on the borders of the Armach-nesti. Bok is not part of any kingdom, its neutrality established by the Charter of Confederation. It maintains its own guard (primarily elvish) and defenses to discourage a coup attempt by a member. However, Bok is not allowed any representation on the council as this would compromise its absolute neutrality. Even when the full council is not in session, each kingdom maintains a representative, an Ambassador to the Cabinet, in Bok. Diplomats and agents of Thenol and the League also make their homes here. With so many people from so many different kingdoms, Bok is the largest and most cosmopolitan city in all of Armach.

THE FIRST EDICTS

Not all of the history of the Silvanaes has been bright with the glow of enlightened rule, and nothing shows this better than the First Edicts. These are a set of four laws, enacted by the Silvanaes prior to the founding of the Confederation. These laws, written into the Charter of Confederation by the elves, establish strict limits on the rights of non-elves. The laws of the First Edicts are:

"The land of the Armach-nesti is the sole possession of the People of Silvanos, their's to use and dwell alone. Unto this land may the Sons and Daughters of Silvanos come alone and no other. Death is the punishment for all who trespass upon these lands. (No one other than a Silvanaes elf is allowed to enter the land of Armach-nesti.)

"No heerikil shall know a daughter of Silvanos, nor shall a man of our people have relations with a heerikil. If it be shown a Child of Silvanos entered into this pact foreknowing, the punishment is exile from Armach-nesti. For a heerikil who breaks this law through deceit or violence, the punishment is death. (Intermarriage between the Silvanaes and outsiders [heerikil] is forbidden.)

"No heerikil shall bring suit against a Child of Silvanos for ruination of property should that accused hold a letter of warrant for the deed from the Prince of the People. (If an elf has secured the permission of his Prince, he can seize any property or goods of any outsider.)

"No heerikil shall be allowed as master of a greatwater vessel, nor shall any heerikil claim title to captaincy of a command that may be of more than his own kind." (No outsider can be captain of a ship that sails beyond the Outer Shoals. No outsider can command a force of troops from two different nations. Only the Silvanaes can lead an army with forces from all of Armach.)

These laws were created with two purposes in mind. First, the laws create a separate land for the elves, just as they had in Silvanesti. Second, the laws keep the non-elves (humans in particular) from becoming too powerful, limiting them to positions unlikely to threaten the elven powerbase. With these laws in the Charter of Confederation, the non-elves have found it difficult, if not impossible at times, to challenge the elves in council.

When the laws were first written, the elves felt these harsh measures were necessary. Death to their minds was the only penalty suitable for the barbarians around them. Since that time, both the elves and their neighbors have changed, but the laws have not.

Furthermore, these laws have been interpreted and expanded on over the years. What constitutes property that can be legally taken? Does mental telepathy constitute trespass into the Armach-nesti? What is the status of a half-elf? Answering these questions has strengthened the inherent injustice of the First Edicts. Now, even though many of the Silvanaes feel the Edicts unjust, they have become ingrained into the society.

THE ARMACH-NESTI

The heart of the Armach Confederation is the Armach-Nesti, the Dry Land of the People. Nestled between the New Mountains and the Bay of Hoor, this is the private preserve of the Silvanaes, a homeland they jealously guard. No one is allowed to enter and disturb the life of the elves. Those who have tried in the past have been executed and their bodies thrown into the sea.

Clearly, the Armach-Nesti did not exist before the elves arrived. Originally the

territory belonged to several of the petty kingdoms that filled the valley of Hoor. When they first arrived, the elves settled quietly in a corner of this area while they regrouped and struggled to survive.

During this time they were attacked several times by the king on whose land they had settled. The raids and wars stretched out over many years, hardening the hearts of the elves. Fearful for their way of life, the concept of the Armach-nesti was born. No longer content with the idea of simple survival, the elves set out to conquer their neighbors, thereby ensuring their own security. With their superior organization and administration, their victories were swift and sure. The natives of the conquered lands were driven from their homes by fire and sword and the Armach-nesti was declared.

At first, the elves attempted to recreate the land of Silvanesti, now referred to as "The Land Not to Be Forgotten." At the heart of the land is New Silvanost, a jumble of towers and palaces, half-empty and forlorn looking. Here they futilely attempted to recapture the glory of their ancient capital in Silvanesti. However, they had not the years nor all the master craftsmen needed to raise the great towers and palaces of their homeland. Nonetheless, they persisted in trying, deluding themselves, rationalizing their accomplishments and efforts as necessary to instill the proper virtues into their children and their children to come.

However, the whole effort has failed. New Silvanost is a town of ghosts, inhabited by those unable to accept the fate of the People here in the land of Taladas. The building has stopped and little effort is made to maintain those palaces that have been completed. Vines have begun to wrap around window sills. Doors are blocked by trees. Flowers crack through the floors. Instead most elves choose to live in the deep woods that make up most of Armach-nesti.

In the copses and glades, among the towering trees and flower-filled meadows, the elves have found a new home, not a pale copy of Silvanesti. Using their love of natural things and their cunning arts for illusion and charm, they have fashioned concealed homes among the woods. One is built into the spreading branches. Another disappears into a hollowed-out trunk. An open glade conceals a small mansion of grasses and flowers. There are no concentrations of houses; no villages, towns or cities. The entire Armach-nesti is home of the elves. At every point there is a hidden dwelling, in a tree, a low mound, behind the waterfall of a rilling brook. Each is sited to take advantage of the natural beauty. Each home is unspoiled by development and construction.

There are still blighted areas within the Armach-nesti. The fields, once tended by human farmers, are allowed to grow rank with weeds. Human villages, little more than ashes and stone foundations, are slowly succumbing to the advance of the forest. The elves shun these places, for they are reminders of evil days, the atrocities they perpetrated on others.

They have a better reason than just memories, however. Within these old villages lurk unavenged spirits. They are normally confined within the barren grounds of their destroyed homes, but on gloomy nights when the moon is dark, they roam farther abroad seeking out their persecutors. On these nights the Armach-nesti is lit with a thousand points of light, bonfires and torches lit by the Silvanaes to keep the spirits at bay. These are nights of quiet terror for the elves.

By the tradition established by the First Edicts, the border of Armach-nesti is fiercely guarded. There are no roads into the land. Wagon-borne goods bound for this region are brought to the border and unloaded, kept in warehouses until elven bearers come to carry them away. Trade by sea is brought to small island just offshore and unloaded. From here it is carried into the Armach-nesti by elvish sailors. Just within the borders are a maze of paths. Some lead safely to the interior. Others are trapped with magical enchantments to lure and imprison the unwary. Patrols of elven guards regularly sweep the borders, checking for intruders.

Those that are captured can expect no mercy. Bound with elven rope, they are brought to the chambers of. the Prince. Here they are presented to the Knight-Protector, the guardian of Armach-nesti. He hears the details of capture and passes the judgment. Intentional entry is punished by death and failure to know the borders is no defense. The only possible hope a trespasser has is to prove involuntary trespass—that he was forced to cross the border by another. This exception to the hard and fast laws of First Edict became necessary when the elves discovered their neighbors using the borders as a method of committing murder. A man, wishing to eliminate an enemy, would force him to enter the Armach-nesti (either through force or spells) and then let the elves perform the actual deed. Not caring to be pawns of the evil desires of the humans, the elves began taking more care in their punishments. Still, this leniency is rarely exercised.

RELIGION

One would have expected the Flight of the Gods to have created upheaval and change in the culture of the elves. This was not the case. The elves have lived a long time and seen much. The chaos of the Cataclysm, brought on by the humans, was just another event in their long history. The actual destruction of the Cataclysm was more traumatic than the loss of clerical abilities. Although they had clerics, the elves were never particularly religious. It is their nature to be self-reliant, not looking to the gods for aid. The flight of the gods only reinforced this attitude.

However, just because their powers (and their most faithful priests) disappeared does not mean that religious life has disappeared completely. The practices, tales, titles, and all the other trappings have been preserved as an important part of the elven culture. The ceremonies are performed without particular feeling, often for the edification of the children and the amusement of the community. The attitude reinforces the human prejudice that the elves are flighty and irresponsible.

In spite of this attitude, two particular cults have flourished among the elves. The first cult, that of the Sea Lord, has much to do with the circumstances of their arrival. The Great Storm that blew them off course, the search for a safe landfall, the sailor who guided them through the Outer Shoals, and the survival they owed to the wealth of the sea in the first years have all served to strengthen a belief in the Sea Lord. Previously the elves had never had much involvement with the sea, so the Sea Lord held a minor position in their beliefs. Now that their lives rely, in part, on the bounties of the sea, the few priests of the Sea Lord have gained in importance.

These priests (and priestesses, for the Sea Lord has appeared as both a male and female) wear the traditional light blue and green robes of their sect, the colors supposedly of the ancient dress of elven seamen. Males crop their hair short, while females wear theirs in a severe and unflattering style. About their necks they wear a rosary of chain and shells. Each carries a fishing spear, a ceremonial weapon that denotes their office.

Since the Sea Lord had such a small role in the beliefs of the elves before the voyage, the priests have found it necessary to create rites and ceremonies to perform. This has not been too difficult, since the importance of the sea has increased since the landfall in Taladas.

Priests are integral to the building of any boat, invoking the Sea Lord when the keel is laid and guiding the shipwright to the "silvaama" (heart-wood), a special timber cut from an equally special tree. This beam will contain the soul of the ship when all is done. The priest paints the eyes that adorn the bow of every ship and through his visions selects the design that is dyed onto the sail.

When the ship is finished and ready to be launched, the master invites the priest to the feast of welcome. For this meal, part ceremony and part celebration, the master provides a banquet for the shipwright and all his workers. The food is laid out before the bow of the vessel, under its eyes. Before the feast begins, the priest calls upon the Sea Lord, notifying him that a new child can be born. At this point, supposedly, the Sea Lord sends a soul to inhabit the silvaama and the ship is born. Baby's food is offered to the newborn vessel.

Based on the omens observed during the birth, the ship is then named and its fortunes predicted. Although it seems that the priests can always find good in the worst omens, there have been times when an ill fortune was predicted. Such ships are viewed as cursed, even evil; it is not unknown for the master to break the silvaama to release the evil spirit. Of course, a new silvaama must be found and the feast held again before it is ready to go to sea. All at the feast then salute the child and the celebration begins.

The priests of the Sea Lord have many other, lesser tasks. Each day one goes to the beach, before the fishing fleet sets sail, to pray for the generosity of the Sea Lord in the day's fishing. They preside at the funerals of sailing men. They bless fleets going to war and are often found in the foremost ranks of warships. They call upon the Sea Lord to soothe raging storms so that wives may see husbands again or to rouse the waters to a fury so that an enemy armada might be driven on the rocks. Lacking powers, they have no certainty their requests are heard or acted upon by their god, so anytime their prayers are fulfilled they see it as a miraculous intervention.

The second religious cult never existed before the Silvanaes arrived in Hoor. This is the cult of Ildamar the Earthspirit. Upon their safe arrival, the elves asked the blessing of the earthspirit of this new land. Earthspirits, like those of wood and water, are common beliefs of the elves, who see many things animated or touched with the glory of the gods. For most, this request was sufficient; no more thought was given to the matter. However, a few sought out the earthspirit to protect the people and learn her mysteries.

What they found was not an earthspirit (for there was no earthspirit proper), but Mislaxa seeking to ease the pain of those suffering. Still charged with the need for secrecy, she appeared to these seekers in the guise of Ildamar, whom they came to call the Earthspirit. The faithful of those who sought her she granted with powers of healing and wisdom and sent them back to their people. There they have sought to aid all people, not just the elves, and spread the teachings of Ildamar.

Priestesses of Ildamar (for the majority of the followers are female) are an intense group. They are strict vegetarians and even then cannot eat without first asking forgiveness of the Earthspirit. They wear nothing made from the fruits of the soil or the hides of dead animals, restricting them to scratchy woolens, chafing hairshirts, and silken soft spider threads. They cannot use metallic items, for metals are dug from the ground. Most often they have staves or clubs made from fallen tree branches. Because of these restrictions, they are most often barefoot and threadbare. Their clothes are not cool and during the hot summer months, they wear as little as possible. By some they are considered mad, although few can deny the existence of their powers.

Ildamarian priestesses have two main tenets they attempt to follow. First, they attempt to ease the suffering and pain of all living creatures, using their spells to do so. Second, they act as protectors of the Earthspirit. This can make them difficult to deal with, for they are opposed to such activities as mining, lumbering, hunting, trapping, and the like. Although most members realize the necessity of such activities and allow them so long as they are conducted with care and respect for the Earthspirit, radical elements of the cult view all such actions as wrong and evil.

Prevented from using force against the transgressors, these priestesses will act indirectly against the offenders. They steal tools, tear up trap lines, drive animals away, and even use their spells to mislead and confuse their opponents. Such radicals are none too popular with the locals and most are shunned by more moderate members of their faith. They take to living alone or in small groups in the woods. At times when tensions are running high, they have even been hunted and killed by those they torment.

Because of the influence of the elven

culture, the humans of the region have adopted one or both of these religions into their own societies. The centaurs favor the cult of Ildamar, the humans on the coast that of the Sea Lord. In the process they have all added in rituals and interpretations unique to their own cultures, perhaps incorporating the ceremonies observed for another earlier sea god (and rationalizing the whole thing away as a new incarnation of the god).

Local myth and legend become intertwined with that of the elves, so there are many regional variations of the same belief. -Although this has led to some dispute between the different temples, most are content to see their version as correct and all others as well-intentioned but slightly errant.

Beyond these adopted gods, the human kingdoms of the Confederation have theirown, older beliefs. Like all others, they suffered the effects of the Flight of the Gods and in many ways had the same reactions—astonishment, loss of faith, and rationalization. For the most part, these cults are small, limited to a single kingdom or group of people. However, one—the forbidden cult of Usa the Mighty—has developed a large following throughout the Confederation.

Usa the Mighty is actually another name for Hiteh the Merchant. His role (as portrayed by his followers) is that of unifier of kingdoms, the god who shall bind all to his following. As befits Hiteh, this is primarily accomplished through cunning diplomacy, although force of arms is always another possibility. His followers are fanatically dedicated to the goal of uniting all of Armach (especially those troublesome elves) and then neighboring Thenol and the League under one ruler—the Grand Holy Knight of the cult. To this end, his priests attempt to influence kings, bring -about certain events, and even eliminate opposition to their goals. All this is done according to Hiteh's divine direction.

The Usa cult is not popular with the elven rulers, for it threatens their security and the security of all Armach, especially the Armach-nesti. They have used their power to have it banned within the borders of Armach. Those followers of Usa who are discovered are given the opportunity to forswear their ways and curse their god or die.- The choice has proven effective even among a group noted for its treachery, for Hiteh is unforgiving of those who betray him in word or deed. None can hope to falsely repent and later return to the fold. Indeed those who accept conversion often die by the hands of their ex-fellows.

There is a difference between banning and defeating, however. Usa's followers have only gone underground and now their role in things is harder to detect and expose. There is a tendency to blame every evil event on them whether justified or not. Furthermore, their goals have become more mysterious. Those in the Confederation concerned with the threat spend much time double-guessing the actions of the Council, trying to decide which decisions (if any) may have been Usa-inspired. Indeed, combatting the cult has become a paranoid's dream and nightmare.

Because the cult is so secretive, the leaders of the Confederation are constantly looking for new sources of information about the Usans. What little they do know suggests some type of alliance between the Usans and the Thenolian king. This worries them and they want to know more. Just because they are leaders does not mean they are above using spies or making midnight raids on suspected lairs. Indeed, in recent years there has been a growing secret war between the two factions.

THENOL

Filling most of the lower arc of Southern Hosk is the bleak kingdom of Thenol. Although it is the largest nation in land area, it is not as mighty as the Imperial League nor as fiercely defensive as the Confederation of Armach. While the ruler of Thenol, Bishop Trandamere, lacks subtlety, he has more than his share of ruthlessness. Under his leadership, Thenol has become a kingdom of fearful citizens, slaves, and unholy armies.

Initially a small knot of lands, Thenol has grown by conquest to its present size. To the south it has expanded as far as where the marshy Trillium River flows into Blackwater Glade. Beyond this are the lands of the dragonmen, who dwell in the reedy jungles deep in the Glade. Once dragonmen raided Thenol out of the glade, now they are recruited for Thenol's army.

To the east, the borders of Thenol have been pushed up to the Steamwall Mountains. Here further expansion has proven impossible. The mountains are inhospitable, home to hobgoblins and other creatures. Some of these too have been recruited into the legions of Thenol.

To the west is the sea. Unlike the minotaurs and the Silvanaes of Armach, the Thenolites have never developed the skills of shipbuilding and sailing. All their ships stay close to the coast, mostly small fishermen trying to earn a living. For Thenol, there is no future on the sea.

North is the only direction left for Thenol to expand its borders. However, going in this direction has not been easy. Near the Steamwall are thick forests that resist the incursions of the Thenolites. In these woods, shadowy forms, the hulderfolk, slip through the ranks to strike suddenly and secretly. All attempts to claim these dark forests have failed, and now the Lords of Thenol argue that the forests are worthless anyway.

Bypassing the lands of the hulderfolk, Thenol's armies have come up against the legions of the League. For the first time, the Thenolite army has encountered serious opposition. Compared to the exacting discipline of the Imperial Legions, the Thenolites are nothing but an armed rabble. However, they have the advantage of mass. Their undead warriors are slow and lack initiative, but they are relentlessly single-minded in the execution of their orders. In the battles fought on the borders of Thenol and the Conquered Lands, neither side has yet scored a decisive blow. Each nation is mustering more troops to the border and sending more spies into the enemy camp in preparation for the next major campaign.

Along the coast, Thenol has also met the

soldiers of Armach. In this case, however, it was the warriors of the Confederation who pushed against the borders of Thenol. Finding it lightly defended, they choose to expand across the border. At first they were successful, but Thenol reacted quickly. The Confederation was shoved back, no match for the hordes of undead of Thenol. Indeed all the warriors succeeded in doing was drawing the attention of Thenol to the rich farmlands of Armach. The future looked hopeless for Armach.

For a time it seemed that Armach was indeed doomed. The armies of the Confederation were forced back in rout before the advance of Thenol's companies. Each failure left a battlefield of dead that only swelled the ranks of Thenol's ghoulish legions.

But the continued advance worked both ways. While the Armachians lost ground, they gained experience and time; while the Thenolites advanced, they stretched their lines of communication and supply. Zombies may not require much in way of feeding, but their masters and the elite troops with them did. The men tired and grew rebellious. Defectors, lured by the better life Armach promised over Thenol, made through the lines to betray their commanders. Eventually even minor Lords changed sides, taking full companies of men with them. The resistance stiffened and the pace of the advance slowed.

Although the situation was headed for stalemate, with Thenol well inside the Confederation borders, the balance was abruptly changed when elsewhere Thenol reached the frontier of the League. The battles against the League quickly drew in all the men of Thenol. With no reinforcements, the army facing Armach was forced to rely heavily on its undead contingent. While good for the attack, these mindless creatures fared poorly in the more complicated defensive role. Thenol has been forced to fall back at a painful cost for Armach. The old borders have been restored, but the armies have exhausted themselves and cannot fight further for the moment.

THE THENOLITES

The Thenolites are a tall, straight-limbed race, whose blood is a mixture of the survivors of Styrllia and the natives they found in their new homeland. Their skin is reddish-brown, a blend of the lighter-skinned Styrllian blood and the darker tones of the ancient Thenolites. Their hair is straight and red to dark brown in color. Their eyes are narrow and set far apart. They have long necks and sharp, strong chins.

The clothing of the typical Thenolite is a combination of different styles. The cut and styling of the clothing is similar to that of the mountain people of ancient Styrllia. Men wear trousers, tied at the ankles and the waist, and large, loose smocks. These have half-sleeves and reach to the mid-thigh. The traditional belts (which were heavily embroidered) have been transformed into large, dyed sashes. During hot weather, field workers change their trousers for loincloths and dispense with the sashes. In the worst of weather, the men wear nothing but their loincloths. The women wear ankle-length dresses, slit to the thigh. The Thenolites have exchanged the heavy wools and leathers of their mountain clothing for the lightweight cottons of the warmer Thenolian climes. Bright colors have replaced the dour browns and greens of the Styrllians.

The noblemen and women of Thenol dress similarly in style to their everyday counterparts, but there the comparison ends. The materials used are much more lavish, the colors brighter, and the ornaments finer. Silk (which is made in certain parts of the land) is worn almost exclusively, dyed in dazzling yellows, reds, blues, purples, and greens. Much use is made of embroidered appliques, silver fastenings, and rare ivory pins. Supple, dyed leathers are used to make slippers, gloves, vests, and the like. At formal occasions, a warrior-Lord may wear a elaborately wrought suit of steel armor, something brought out only for parades and triumphs.



HISTORY

Thenol was the second land created by exiles from Styrllia. Led by Guidan, the Styrllians endured great hardships in their march to the coast. Like those on the other expedition, these Styrllians were a difficult and rebellious lot but, unlike Kristophus, Guidan did not resort to harsh measures. He viewed the malcontents and rebellious with kindness. Although he occasionally had to act to crush an uprising, he often tried to hear their complaints justly and act upon them.

While this was noble and commendable, it fatally undermined Guidan's power, especially when he tried to appease the powerful by granting them titles and rights. By the time they reached the future land of Thenol, Guidan was in command of his people in title only. The trekkers were split between different factions, each with its own prince, duke, or baron. These nobles were the true rulers, deferring to Guidan only for the sake of appearances.

Indeed, even the decision to found the city of New Aurim (the future capital of Thenol) was not Guidan's; the choice was forced upon him by his nobles. Tired of endless journeying, they said enough was enough and demanded an end to the trek. Although Guidan argued that a better and safer home would be found if the people pressed on just a little further, the nobles would have nothing to do with it. Many now wish the nobles had listened to those words, for New Aurim is an ill-famed and grim place.

With the settlement of New Aurim, the nobles seized the lands around the town. In no time at all they fell upon each other, struggling for control of territory. Each man sought to create his own country and control the office of the king. Perhaps those who were wiser moved away from the center to find their own lands, although such decisions may have been motivated by fear.

Whatever the reason, the end result was the same. Tenuously united under the rule of a king, Thenol was founded, a quarrelsome collection of manors and counties, each under the rule of a duke, baron, or other titled man. These nobles made up the Senate of Lords, which was headed by the king. Even the Senate had little power, since no lord would consent to pay its taxes or raise troops to its command. In the end, Thenol was a kingdom in name only.

Thus the lands of Thenol continued for several centuries. Fifteen kings, all of the blood of Guidan, have ruled since the founding of New Aurim. There have been changes in their fortunes, some more influential than others, but no king has managed to wrest power from the Lords. The kings have been suffered out of respect for tradition and the moral value they add to those who control them. The king has palaces, servants, bodyguards, titles, consorts, and a queen, but all his duties are ceremonial. He brings the Senate to order, signs proclamations, and appears at holidays to give his blessing to whatever is asked.

True power, such as it is among this quarrelsome group, is held by the Lords, the Great Lords in particular. The Great Lords are largest landholders of Thenol. They alone have the power to make or break kings and are not hesitant to exercise it. What keeps them from total control is their intense dislike of each other. Acting together they have the power to bull through any proclamation they wish, but no one trusts any other enough to cooperate. Most often, the Great Lords split and the remaining Lords swing the balance one way or the other. Of course there are times when the Great Lords do act together. They are wise enough to band together in the face of a threat to them all and sometimes they act as a group to show unity (even when not all agree).

The remaining Lords form the bulk of the kingdom. They hold small manors, fiefs, and territories. Many aspire to the ranks of the Great Lords and work to expand their claims by expanding the borders of Thenol. There are Lords who have fixed their fortunes to one of the houses of the Great Lords. There are also independent Lords, playing a chancy game of balancing one power off against another. Many who try are swallowed up by their own schemes, but those who can walk this tightrope are potentially as powerful as the Great Lords, One who has mastered this game is Bishop Trandamere.

Bishop Trandamere

The danger that Thenol presents today would not exist were it not for the domineering spirit of Bishop Trandamere. With little more than a simple title, he has ruled Thenol for 40 years. In that time he has transformed the people and the land. Supremely confident and supremely evil, Bishop Trandamere is the chosen vessel of Hiteh's plans to gain power over all the people of Taladas.

When he first came to power as the head of the Temple of Hith (Hiteh), it was nothing more than a small cult, one of many, that preached among the baronies, principalities, and duchies that composed Thenol. Trandamere, though, was marked by Hiteh as his agent, even before the Bishop was aware of his own role. Suddenly, he received the blessing of his god, empowered with abilities like the great priests of legend. With such clear sign of favor, Hith's temple flourished. Under Trandamere's guidance, the cult quickly spread throughout the lands of Thenol.

The people were amazed—the Temple of Hith had actual priests, just as in the old stories. This was something no other religion had. The priests of Hith could perform miracles. With this power, the Temple of Hith easily attracted followers. Soon Bishop Trandamere could approach the lesser Lords with something of value. In exchange for support in the Senate, Trandamere provided the Lord with soldiers, taken from the ranks of his followers; soldiers used to annex neighboring lands. He quickly became a force to reckoned with in the Senate.

Still, at this point, he was less powerful than the Great Lords. He was a significant force and the Great Lords even made use of him in their own power struggles, but he was no threat to their position. Most found him boorish and grasping, not a peer of their level. Although they used him, they snubbed him and constantly reminded him of his place.

However, Bishop Trandamere had an

entirely different idea from the Great Lords of just what his place was. Others saw his selling of followers as a crude (although effective) bid for power and dismissed it at this. However, Trandamere's plan was even more sinister. In selling the services of his followers, Trandamere spread his priests throughout the land, gaining access to more and more courts. At the same time, select followers gained experience in the arts of war, learning the lessons of battle. Their observations resulted in changes; a cavalry force was trained, siege trains were assembled, and others were taught the intricacies of the quartermaster's corps. These things were obvious to the Lords, but still did not reveal Trandamere's true intentions.

Finally, on the Dragon's Night, a solemn festival in the dead of winter, the forces of Hith acted. The priests of Hith were skilled in the arts of necromancy, a little something they kept secret from the uninitiated. On Dragon's Night, they went to the cemeteries and graveyards and secret places where they had stockpiled the dead and there worked their dark arts. Coffins broke and the grave earth was pushed aside as the dead answered the call. Suddenly, Bishop Trandamere's army was immense, its ranks swelled with unquestioning undead. Under the command of his experienced men, this mongrel army assaulted the manors and castles of key Lords. By the dawn of Dragon's Night, Thenol belonged to Bishop Trandamere. For 40 years he has kept it under his control.

The Government of Thenol

In forty years, Bishop Trandamere has changed the face of Thenol, although the land is still far from what he desires. He has succeeded in altering the balance of power and reducing his opposition, but he has not yet broken it. At the same time, new challenges to his power have come from unexpected sources.

Although Bishop Trandamere is essentially the leader of Thenol, he holds no office and works behind the scenes. To the naive, gullible, or uninformed, it appears that Trandamere has no say in government matters beyond that of a friendly councillor. As in the past, all official functions are handled by the king and the Senate.

The king is as much a puppet as he ever was, a ruler without power or influence. The only real differences are that he is now under the control of the Bishop and that he appears at a few less ceremonies than before the coup. Indeed, the only ceremonies he appears at are non-religious or those favoring the Temple of Hith. The many other religious functions the king once attended are banned from the state by Royal Proclamation. Through the king, Trandamere has made Hith the one and only god of Thenol.

The Senate is in the process of being reduced to puppet status. Certainly the Bishop controls enough of the Senate to have his way. The majority of the Lords have openly sided with him, attracted by promises of wealth and domination over others. A few have been forced to join, like it or not, since their lands are infested with followers of Hith. More than one Lord has been butchered in the night, his family massacred, and his titles dispersed to loyal followers of Bishop Trandamere. It is through tactics like these that the Bishop has seized control.

However, he is not without opposition. Two of the Great Lords, Baron Markeides and Prince Raimos, have resisted Bishop Trandamere throughout the years. Although they do not oppose the Bishop in the Senate, for this would be suicide, they labor behind the scenes to reduce his power and increase their own strength. There are times when the Bishop must still deal by compromise and negotiation. As much as he would like to, Trandamere cannot crush these two outright lest he lose the support he already has in the Senate. Thus, Markeides and Raimos represent one threat to the Bishop's power.

What gives the Bishop power in the Senate is his army—the hordes of undead that unquestioningly do the bidding of their clerical commanders and fanatically loyal followers of Hith. However the army also needs careful watching. There is always the risk that some commander or priest will decide he can run things better than Trandamere. Thus, Trandamere controls all appointments of officers. Indeed, being an officer in the Thenolite army can be a dangerous business. Become even suspected of treason and execution is the reward. With his army, Trandamere is able to keep Thenol easily under his command.

However, Thenol is not the end of Trandamere and Hiteh's plans. Indeed, it is only the start. Since stabilizing his rule in Thenol, Bishop Trandamere has sent his armies against his neighbors, particularly Armach and the League. At the same time he has sent his priests to potential allies throughout Southern Hosk. Agents of Thenol can be found in the various courts of the Confederation, among the Marak Kender, and in the camps of the hobgoblins of the Steamwall. These agents are attempting to build a coalition of evil to gain control of Southern Hosk and eventually all of Taladas.

The Army

The Army of Thenol is Bishop Trandamere's instrument of diplomacy and terror. It is second only to the Temple of Hith as a prop for his power. Without its support, it is doubtful Trandamere could keep his grip on the Senate of Thenol.

The army of Thenol has three distinct groups of warriors. Each supplies a different aspect to the overall structure of the army. First, there are the undead. These warriors are under the absolute control of the Temple. Second are the fanatics. While willing to sacrifice themselves for the cause, they can turn on the Temple leaders if they feel their faith has been offended. Finally, there are the Companies of the Lords, the only part of the army not under the Bishop's direct control.

Trandamere is perfectly aware of the importance of his legions and has taken steps to see that it always follows his bidding and that of no others. Although he claims no rank, he is the supreme commander of the army. He does not need a rank. Through the Senate, he controls the appointment of the few officers. He

sets the quotas of troops that must be supplied by each Lord. He allocates funds from the treasury to support the army and determines where they will quarter when not on campaign. Finally he determines were the army will go and what it will do. Such power tends to be self-perpetuating. Since he has control of the army, he can use it to squash any attempts to seize control away from him. For the challengers, it is a no-win situation.

Although Trandamere rigidly controls the foremost command post, the army, especially the Companies, is actually rather lax about chains of command. This is due, in great part, to the tradition of pride and stubbornness held by the Lords. Unlike the League, there is no official organization like a legion. Troops are collected, rearranged, and disbanded freely, without any regard for a permanent arrangement. Commanders and rank are determined by seniority and agreement. Prestigious and powerful Lords command large companies, while junior Lords seldom have the chance to lead more than a file or squadron. Sometimes overall command is wielded by majority, especially when there are many powerful Lords present at the battle. At all times, the Lords can be depended to obey orders only when it suits them.

As insurance against the whims and treacheries of the Lords, Bishop Trandamere enforces a rigid discipline on the rest of the army. His strongest control is over the masses of undead. These warriors can exist and fight only because of the Temple of Hith. The commanders of the undead are all priests of the Temple, placed by the Bishop. Only they can give orders to their host and only they can animate newly fallen men to serve as replacements. The Bishop's only risk is that one or more of these men will attempt to seize his power. These men would be ambitious with or without the army and Trandamere watches everything they do.

The fanatics are more difficult to control. The problem here is that they are loyal to the ideas of the Temple of Hith and not to the temple or the Bishop. Most of their leaders rise from their own ranks, charismatic men who inspire the others. These leaders, self-proclaimed seers, are a great danger to the Bishop. He must take care to see that none of them become too popular or preach ideas contrary to his own. Sometimes such men are brought into the Temple hierarchy only to be shuffled aside, out of sight. Some men are cleverly discredited. A few conveniently die, martyrs to the cause of Hith.

Another problem is that the fanatics are fanatics. They fight because they believe in certain things, the righteousness of their cause in particular. The Bishop has to be careful not to offend the beliefs of the fanatics. At the same time, he cannot allow himself to become captive to them. Sometimes this is a very careful balancing act.

Lastly with the fanatics, there is the issue of failure. Fanatics are a fickle lot, following this person and that person, hearing the voice of a god here or there. Each failure increases the risk that the fanatics will decide the blessing of Hith has departed Trandamere's expeditions. Once convinced of this, there is no regaining their support.

The Bishop must pick battles for his fanatics wisely. He dares not use them where the outcome is uncertain, but he also cannot afford to waste them on certain victories. He tries to send them on campaigns where their presence can make the difference between victory and defeat. For example, the fanatics were withdrawn from the Armach long before the situation began to reverse itself.

There is no standardized dress, armor, or weapons for any group of the army. Yet each has certain common features that characterize the troops of that faction. Some of these are grossly physical, such as the rotten stench of the zombie encampments, while others are subtle differences of personality.

The undead forces are the most distinctive. Their ranks are composed of zombies, skeletons, and a few ghouls. No concern is paid to their outfitting—the commander-priests will let them fight barehanded if necessary. Tactically, they are only good on the attack, when the commands are simple. They do well-enough when ordered to "Advance and kill all living things before you," although there have been occasions where even this simple order has transformed itself into disaster. On the defense, they are all but useless. The only effective order they can be given is "Kill all who attempt to pass." This transforms them into little more than a wall. True, they form an impediment to the enemy, but he can easily confound them.

The priests are another weakness. Only they can command the undead (or so they claim) and each priest can only practically command a few. After a few encounters with the undead, clever enemies order their men to hunt out the priests and kill them whenever possible. This tactic has proven effective at both crippling command and slowing the speed at which the undead ranks are refreshed.

On campaign, the other troops keep as far as possible from the undead. Aside from their evil reputations and repulsive habits, the undead, especially the ghouls, are difficult to control. Sometimes they grow hungry and take what they want—other soldiers. Even their own priests have fallen prey to them. Nighttime is the most dangerous, for that is when they are most active.

The second group are the Fanatics of Hith. While the fanatics have no uniform, each has taken an oath of poverty (turning over all wealth to the Temple of Hith). Thus the common soldier wears nothing but simple ragged clothes and a brimless cap, both dyed yellow as a sign of his devotion. Most use a sword or spear. None carry bows, crossbows, or slings, since they do not have the training or temperament to stand off and fire at an enemy; they are best suited to mass charges. Leaders of the fanatics, usually warrior-priests, give the oath of poverty lip service by avoiding ostentatious displays of wealth, but they are not about to forgo armor and high-quality weapons.

Tactically, the fanatics are best on the offense. They are good at following simple orders, since they are untrained in the lessons of war. When properly enthused by their leaders, they fight with berserk fury with little regard for their own losses. In these ways they are like the undead.

They are also headstrong and impatient, very much unlike the undead. It is difficult to restrain them from the field, especially if things look like they are going badly. They cannot be held in reserve since their fever pitch cannot be maintained.

They share one final weakness with the undead—their leaders. The fanatics follow the most persuasive of their number, not necessarily the wisest, best-trained, or even the sanest. Their leaders are not professional soldiers but professional rabble-rousers. Some are rare combinations of talent and charisma, wise enough to work with the professionals and well aware of the limitations of their own followers. Most are headstrong, domineering, and self-righteous. After all, the power of Hith is on their side.

The third part of the army is the Companies of the Lords. This is the home of the trained soldiers, men who view the fanatics with professional scorn. Most regard the undead with disgust, at best as tactical tools and nothing more. These men chafe under the leadership of Bishop Trandamere and bristle at each other over old feuds between the different houses.

By law, each Lord provides a group of men, a file or a squadron depending on the type of troop. A single Lord provides 200 to 1,000 or more men. The exact size depends on a quota set by the Senate, which in turn supposedly considers the Lord's ability to support his troops. (The levying of a sizeable troop quota is one of the Bishop's tools to break an opposing Lord.),

Each Lord is assigned a certain number and type of men to provide, as set by the Senate. Wealthy Lords must provide cavalry and infantry. Lesser Lords raise troops of infantry. The men are then organized into larger companies under a single commander. Within a company of infantry will be files belonging to various houses, each file with its own commander, often a noble of that House. Thus a company of 1,000 men might have one file of 500 from Lord Vernol, a second file of 300 from Lord Arghon, and a file of 200 from Lord Hepzibah. The company would have one commander and three subcommanders, although the larger files might have a number of lieutenants.

While the Companies are far superior in training and ability to the undead and the fanatics, they still vary widely in quality. Those whose masters are too poor to outfit and train them properly or are just incompetently led are average at best. Most are veterans, seasoned in campaigns against the dragonmen and hobgoblins. Quite a few have been used to suppress rebellions in the lands of other Lords. Some of these are crack troops, kept on permanent duty. Some attain even higher, elite status. Indeed, poorly served is the Lord who cannot point to an elite bodyguard, whether it be a whole company or just a few brave heroes. In the land of Thenol, bodyguards are more than just showpieces.

In combat, the Companies provide the backbone of the Thenol army. They get the pick of the tough missions, basically anything more complicated that the undead or fanatics can handle. The Companies are most often held in reserve when the army is attacking, except for tricky assaults. This rankles them, knowing they are missing their opportunity to loot the enemy camp. At the same time they take the forefront of any defense, a difficult job for which there is no reward or recognition.

Since each Lord outfits his own men, there is little conformity of dress among the Companies. In general the infantry divides into three groups. The poor Lords supply light infantry, men dressed in long leather coats studded with brass bosses carrying large shields. Swords, nine-foot-long spears, battle axes, and maces are the commonly carried weapons. Helmets of all types are worn.

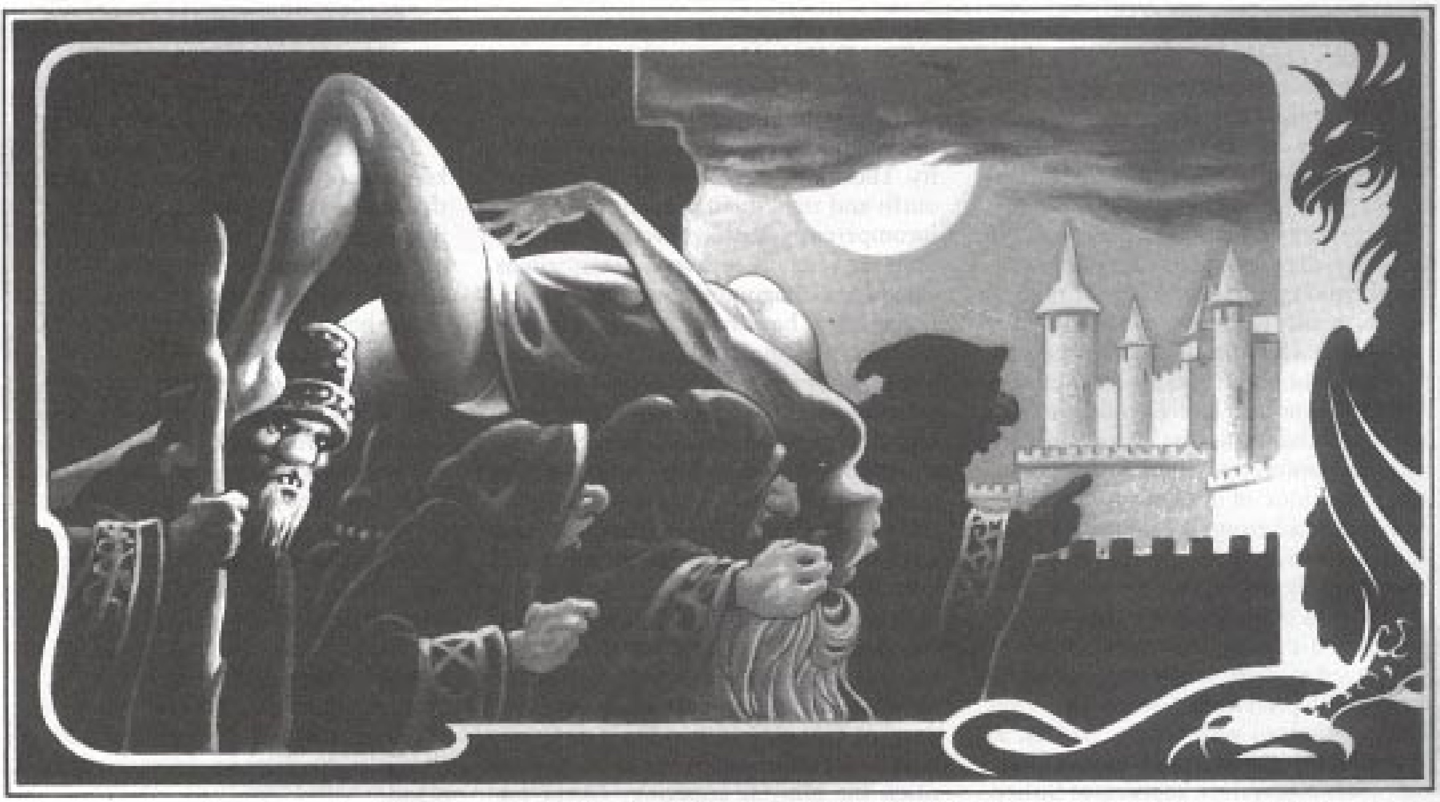
The second group consists of archers and crossbowmen. They are most often dressed in heavy quilted cotton tunics. Aside from the bow or crossbow, each man carries a sword or other hand-to-hand weapon. They are not particularly skilled at close-in fighting and more often than not they break and run if charged. The last group is the heavy infantry, raised by the wealthy Lords. These men wear chain mail or brass-banded armor and carry body shields. They carry long swords and spears. In battle they fight in tight formations, shields overlapping and advancing at a slow march.

The cavalry is organized around the knights of the Lords. These knights form the heavy cavalry. They ride chain- barded horses and wear scale or banded armor. In the charge, they use the heavy lance, flail, and sword. The rest of the cavalry is made up of their squires and attendants. These men ride unarmored horses and wear lighter armor, typically leather or chain mail. They carry any variety of weapons: javelins, swords, maces, flails, lances, etc.

The cavalry is supposed to perform two roles. First, the light cavalry is the eyes of the army. But since the squires do not consider this task worthy of them, it is difficult to get them to make effective reports. They are also used to deliver the important final charge to break the enemy line. This the knights do with great gusto, so much that it is nearly impossible to restrain them. Recalling them from the charge is the greatest difficulty of command.

Command of the Companies is another major problem. It is by right and custom in the hands of the Lords and it is not something they intend to relinquish to the clerics. Command is a matter of honor. Thus no Lord relishes being given orders and all desire to give orders. Supreme command of a Company often involves compromise and diplomacy more than the issuing of commands. It is altogether too common for the commander of a file, squadron, or Company to simply decide to do what he feels is best, regardless of his orders.

Command and control problems are the greatest weakness of the Thenolite army. Their successes have come about through their great numbers and their ability to absorb grievous losses. While these assets have not been enough to overcome the superior professionalism of the Imperial Legions of the League, their deficiencies have not been so serious as to guarantee their defeat.



NEW AURIM

Once, a long time ago, New Aurim was the hope and dream of the people of Thenol. Here was their new home, their chance to rebuild the shattered Empire of Aurim better and greater than it ever was before.

The reality is that New Aurim is a depressing and secretive city. Some cities have colors; New Aurim's is dead gray. It seems to rain constantly in gray sheets of cold rain. The narrow cobbled streets glisten dully with the gray of worn slate. The buildings are gray with wormy wood and rotting stones. The mud is gray with filth and slime. The people—hunched, shuffling, and suspicious—are gray with their lost dreams. Their clothes are gray, the color drained away.

Travelers to New Aurim cannot fail to note its character. The bleak desolation is inescapable. Some travelers have noted the suspicious nature of the citizens; others have been struck by the atrocious weather. Words used to describe Aurim include ill-featured, cold, unfriendly, forbidding, and dying. This last is more accurate than most.

Once New Aurim was not such a haunted city, before the dominance of the Temple of Hith. Now the people live in fear of the Temple Inquisitors, the secret police of Bishop Trandamere. Almost weekly there are public executions of criminals. On unusual occasions these are real criminals, ones who cannot be induced to join the ranks of the Inquisitors or the fanatics. More likely they are political prisoners, unfortunates who have foolishly angered someone within the Temple hierarchy. The bodies are hung over the main gates and in the public square, left there until all the flesh is stripped from the bone. Vultures have taken to roosting on the eaves of the old temples around the square. Once a bustling market, it is now shunned by the locals.

Built on the banks of the Evole River, New Aurim is a sprawling mass of unplanned streets and neighborhoods, all enclosed within a crumbling wall. The streets follow no pattern, twisting and turning where some ancestral builder thought it best. Main streets turn into dead ends, narrow lanes suddenly widen into circles, open sewage ditches flow to the river; all these things can be found within.

The wall that surrounds the city is approximately 20 feet high. Once it was kept in good repair. Now the battlements have crumbled and sections have started to collapse. Zombies and skeletons patrol the walks. From the guard turrets they stare with empty eye sockets out over the plain. The houses near the wall have been abandoned by the honest folk of the city. Squatters and creatures of the night have moved into these buildings. Here among the deserted buildings and dark alleys can be found bodies, the victims of foul deeds, preyed on by their own kind.

Farther from the wall there are more homes, the strongholds of honest people. These are the folk who live in terror, afraid of the things that prowl at night, afraid of the Inquisitors, afraid of their neighbors. At night all the doors are heavily barred and the windows sealed with thick shutters. Screams in the night

are not investigated and the windows remain closed even on the hottest and most humid nights of the year. Each dawn brings relief and thanks for surviving another day.

At the heart of the city are the public buildings, or what remains of them. Once there were temples to a multitude of gods at the heart of New Aurim. If nothing else, the people enjoyed their religions. Now these are abandoned, their doors closed by the edicts of the King under the Bishop's guidance. The Senate building is little used now, most of the Senators meeting at Hawkbluff, site of the First Temple to Hith and Bishop Trandamere's home.

The only major buildings still in use are the city's Temple of Hith and the King's Palace. The Temple is a stately yet sinister building. Its scale is massive, the building upstaging the people inside it. It is meant to inspire awe, but instead it is cold and heartless, inspiring fear in many. The second largest temple to Hith in the land, it contains many secrets, though maybe not those it is rumored to hold. Bishop Trandamere has perhaps foolishly boasted that the Temple at Aurim holds more secrets than there are rumors about the place. It is known that the temple was built over an extensive series of old catacombs. There may be entrances deep within the temple to dark places underground.

The other major building is the King's Palace, actually a prison and not a home. Construction first began with the founding of the city and has continued ever since. The Palace is a sprawling jumble of different architectural styles squeezed together with little sense or reason. In its heyday, the Palace had a staff of several hundred caretakers and gardeners. Now there are only a few.

The Palace has suffered greatly from lack of attention. Weeds push up the paving, breaking the mosaic tiles floors. Roofs leak and water runs down the walls, rotting beams and floors. Entire wings have been abandoned, left to the rats and other vile creatures. The extensive cellars are all but forgotten, and secret dungeons have become the lairs of carrion crawlers and great serpents. The air is stale and mildewed, even on the brightest of days. Within this moldering mausoleum of a home lives the King.

For the King, the Palace is a prison. He is surrounded by guards and servants, all carefully chosen by Bishop Trandamere. He cannot leave the Palace without special consultation with his chamberlain Montiendo, the man who rules the Royal Household. Montiendo schedules audiences with the Lords (a power he has used to increase his own wealth). Even the king's visits to his queen and children are carefully staged and monitored. So accustomed is he to this treatment that he no longer protests or complains about the restrictions. The walls of the Palace now mark the boundaries of his life.

But all is not without hope in New Aurim. True, the people are oppressed and fearful, but there are a few willing to risk their lives to oppose Tyrant Trandamere, as he is sometimes called. These rebels hide throughout the city, avoiding the eyes of the Inquisitors. In small bands they kill guards, rob tax collectors, and free accused criminals. Some of their support and aid comes secretly from the rebellious Lords. The rest comes from what they can take. But they are small, disorganized groups. They oppose the Bishop, but have no plan for bringing him down. At best they try to build resentment and hatred to his policies and his followers, a task that is far from easy. The Temple of Hith has the power to heal or slay, appealing and terrifying choices to the common man.

Recently, the rebels have made contact by way of Armach with priests and priestesses of Mislaxa. These men and women are a revelation for them. Like the followers of Hith, the priests of Mislaxa are able to heal the injured and cure the sick, but without the odious demands of the Temple. These priests are treasured and revered by the rebels as a reason and cause for hope. Many of the rebels have converted to the word of Mislaxa, while still retaining their militant passions. They see themselves as warriors of Mislaxa who will fight the evil of Hith to spread the word of their goddess.

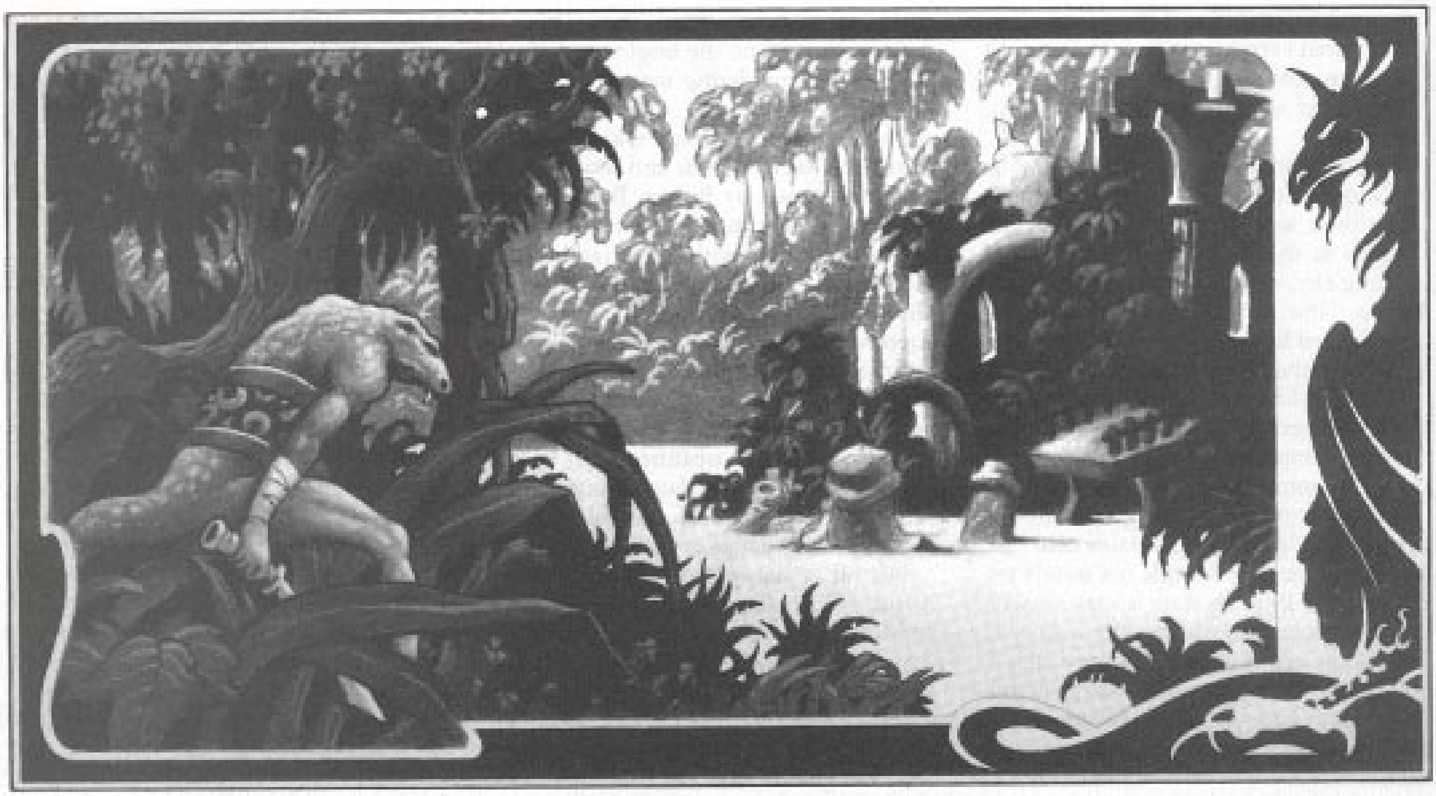
HAWKBLUFF

Fifty miles away from New Aurim, in the rugged hills at the lower end of the New Mountains, is Hawkbluff, site of the Temple of Hith. This is the home of Bishop Trandamere and is the true power center of Thenol. It is also a desolate and lonely place far from any city or town.

Hawkbluff is a jutting tor that stands at the edge of a jagged valley. In and on this pillar of rock, the priests of Hith have carved the First Temple of their faith. The rock has been honeycombed with passages and chambers. At the very top is the main audience chamber of the faith. Just below this is the chamber where the Senate meets, when Trandamere desires to call it. Around this are the private reception halls and special altars used for public and governmental affairs. Descending farther into the rock are libraries, study chambers, and private apartments. There are treasury halls where relics and wonders are kept. There are chapels and penance rooms. Going even deeper are the practical chambers: kitchens, wells, lavatories, storerooms, pantries, and armories. Below these are a small set of cells for detaining heretics awaiting judgment.

Around the base of the tor have sprung up outbuildings necessary for the priests—stables, granaries, workshops, and sleeping quarters. Farther out are the residences of the Lords, small simple buildings. Their construction regulated by law, these buildings are unfortified and built of wood. Their size and adornment is carefully limited to prevent any house from eclipsing the majesty of the First Temple. They are far from luxurious and so are not popular with many of the Lords who must come for the Senate.

Within the heart of Hawkbluff are the apartments of Bishop Trandamere. He makes no secret of where he lives—close to the Senate hall and the main chambers—yet his rooms have secrets. Unknown to all but the highest initiates, Trandamere has installed secret dungeons and catacombs deep beneath his quarters. Secret viewing chambers and listening posts, connected by these passages, enable the Bishop to know all that tran-



spires within Hawkbluff. Hidden entrances throughout the complex give him quick access to virtually any point. The dungeons hold many enemies who have just "disappeared" from the face of the earth. The catacombs hold the bones of many who have crossed the Bishop and lost. Undead patrol these hallways, aided by living guards of even more hideous and sinister natures.

The land around Hawkbluff is deserted. Once there were a few villages in the valley, but all have been abandoned for many years. Some existed here from before the building of the First Temple, others were founded by the men who did the work. After the Temple was completed, livestock began to disappear. Strange clouds and sickly lights were seen day and night over the top of the tor. Crops grew poorly. Many families left in search of better fortune elsewhere.

Then the children began to disappear. Mass searches were made at first, the villagers believing some terrible accident had occurred. Nothing was ever found. Wild animals, gypsies, and the hulderfolk of ancient tales were all blamed. Precautions were taken but the children kept vanishing. Soon the people began mutter about dark goings-on at the Temple, speculating to themselves. In return, the Inquisitors began to roam the streets, arresting heretics and blasphemers.

Most villagers moved away in a virtual flood of humanity. Soon only the old and childless remained. Some died naturally, but many others fell prey to the beasts that were slowly reclaiming the valley until finally, the last family loaded its packs and trudged out of this valley of decay and death. Now all that remains is the Temple of Hith, untouched and uncaring of the horrors around it.

BLACKWATER GLADE

Filling the lower tip of Southern Hosk is a broad drainage basin. This part of the continent has sunk with the Cataclysm to create an immense swamp watered by rivers, such as the Trillium flowing out of Thenol. More water comes down from the Steamwall to feed the Blackwater. This water, warmed by thermal springs, drowsily eddies along reed-choked channels into lakes covered with algae. Shallow-rooted giant cypress trees hung with moss cling to the clumps of high ground, barely above water level. Large areas contain thick brambles of berries growing in marsh water. Along the coast, sea water mingles with the fresh in a belt of saltwater marsh. Here mangroves slowly march out into the sea, extending the Blackwater delta.

Blackwater Glade is a sweltering, bug-infested place. Alligators and water snakes are the simplest of dangers a traveler faces here. Some dragons make their homes along its unexplored channels, less than pleased should their peace be disturbed. Huge insects buzz between the boughs only to be trapped by giant spiders that spin thick webs in the tall trees, cunningly disguised to look like the moss, or struck by the sticky tongues of enormous frogs and toads. Strange creatures hoot and howl at night, leaping from branch to branch, their eyes glow-

ing dully in the moonlight.

Men do not live in Blackwater Glade, nor are they ever likely too. The very air reeks of disease. Many an explorer has been wracked by fevers, chills, and painful spasms for years after a foray into the swamp. The few settlements that have been attempted have disappeared, swallowed by the verdant undergrowth.

Still, a few hardy souls make their livings off Blackwater Glade. These are a close-knit group, the Swampers, as they call themselves. They live at the edge of the great glade, close to their livelihood. In their canoes and flat-bottomed boats, they paddle along the lazy channels. Other men would quickly be lost in the twisting byways and flows, but the Swampers have not spent their lives on the swamp for nothing. They know the best routes and the finest hunting areas for the alligators, giant toads and swamp cats that are their quarry. These are secrets they keep to themselves.

Each Swamper has his own territory and he knows the territories of his neighbors. The honest man stays out of his neighbors' waters and he expects them to stay out of his. An evil man pays no mind to his neighbors and may even try to drive them off. The swamp is a frontier and its justice is that of frontiersmen.

This can create problems, for the Swampers are Thenolites and come under the rule of the Lords and the Bishop. However, they are not ones to pay such things any mind and so the government has only slight control over them, if any at all. Dealing with the Swampers is always a case of bargaining. For example, the Swampers keep an eye on the dragonmen of Blackwater Glade, watching the border for the Lords. In exchange, they pay no taxes.

They will serve as woodsmen and scouts for the Companies, but refuse to be levied for service in the Companies themselves. They are fiercely independent loners who have little use for others, except perhaps those of their own kind. Still, those of good heart cannot turn their backs completely on others. The same cannot be said for those blackguards who have fled to the frontier to escape their past.

The Swampers only touch the edges of Blackwater Glade. Even they are leery of probing too far into its weed-choked paths. Many a man has gone into the deep country and never returned. The few who have braved it, once or even several times, come back with tales of dark terror. These men are brave, but even they only venture in-country for extraordinary reasons. One of these reasons is to make treaties with the dragonmen.

The dragonmen are the true rulers of the swamp. Called dragonmen by the humans, they are the "Bakali" in their own sibilant tongue. The bakali are powerful, humanoid lizards. The average male is seven to eight feet tall from the top of the head to the tip of the toe. They seldom stand fully erect, however, walking hunched over or on all fours. Their hands and feet have long, finger-like talons with webbing in between. Their faces have powerful lizard-like snouts. They have no noses, only breathing nostrils set above their large, lidless eyes. Their bodies are covered in thick alligator-like leather, ridged and spiny down the back, soft and supple on the underside. Their skin is various shades of greens, browns, and yellows, giving them a natural camouflage in the reedy waterways of the swamp.

The bakali are an ancient race; those alive are only degenerate reminders of what they once were. Once they were powerful and terrifying as they raided all along the waterways of Taladas. But that was long ago and their decline began long before the Cataclysm occurred. Indeed the rupture of Taladas during Hiteh's Night actually aided them. For centuries the great swamps that had been their homelands were diminishing, drying out and being drained. The Cataclysm abruptly reversed this process with the creation of the Blackwater. Nonetheless, by the time this occurred, the greatness of the bakali had been lost.

In the present age, the bakali are a primitive race, barely above the level of mindless savages. They are intelligent but are culturally undeveloped, even backward. They live in small villages of 20 or 30 individuals. These are not organized along family lines like most human tribes, for the bakali do not have a concept of family. Females lay eggs in the nesting grounds at the center of the village and when the young are born they are expected to fend for themselves.

The young keep to themselves, playing and imitating their elders, and for the most part the elders ignore them. Food is thrown into the nesting ground for the young to eat and the young scramble for whatever they can get. By this process the weakest starve and the strongest survive.

As the fry get larger, they begin their lessons. At first they observe their elders and imitate them making weapons, cleaning kills, and battling for dominance. This imitation reaches the stage where they are making their own weapons. Once a fry has fashioned his own useable spear, he is allowed to go on the hunt. Here his training continues, as he learns where game is found, the methods of stalking, and how to make the kill. He is still not considered one of the elders. To gain acceptance by the tribe, he must kill a bull alligator without assistance. Only after he has done this does he become one of the elders. This method of growing up is hard and dangerous and many die in the process. Bakali females lay a lot of eggs.

Tribal size among the bakali is determined by dominance and submission. Each tribe has a chief, a powerful male who rules over all others. His position is gained by force and he holds it only so long as he defeats all challengers. The chief has the largest harem, the choicest parts of the kill, and first claim to any prize found. The males under him have a strict pecking order, established in the same way—by who can terrorize whom. Rank determines all the privileges available to the bakali males, from females to part of the kill. Males must either accept their rank or leave the tribe. Invariably when the tribe becomes too large, males leave. Those that survive on their own seek to found their own tribes and often raid their birth tribe or other neighbors for females. This continual struggle strengthens the bakali people, making them powerful warriors.

The villages of the bakali are simple affairs. Although the bakali are amphibians, they build their homes on dry land, usually a low hummock or steep riverbank. When sited on a hummock, the village is a collection of simple reed huts, only about four feet tall. Inside, the floor is dug out into a two-stage pit. The deepest part extends below the water level (only a few feet). Here in the mud and slime is where the bakali sleep. Next to this is a higher level where possessions are kept dry and food is stored. The huts are built in a rough circle around the nesting area, which is usually marked by a fetish-covered post.

When the village is on a riverbank, the homes are dug into the side of the bank. The entrances are broad but low and the bakali crawl in on all fours. The tunnels slope downward almost to the water line. Here several chambers are dug out for storage. The sleeping chamber is again half below the water line, creating the desired mud pit. Dried reeds are pushed through to the surface to create air passages. The nesting ground is on the top of the bank over the tunnels. The fetish post that marks the nest area is set close to the water, with the fetishes looking out over the stream.

Whether hummock or riverbank, all bakali villages are enclosed by a palisade. Just what kind of wall the lizard men build depends on the materials they have at hand. Bakali build walls of woven reeds, thorn bushes, branches, or even skeletons. They never use boards or logs, lacking the tools to fell the trees and shape them. The palisades are flimsy and can be pulled down easily. But then the walls aren't meant to keep determined attackers out. They do discourage attacks by wild animals and at least form a hinderance to raiders.

The bakali lead very basic lives. Most of their time is spent lounging in the sun (they are cold-blooded after all) or hunting. Their weapons are wooden spears, fitted with sharpened bone or fire-hardened to a point. Stone outcroppings are all but unknown in Blackwater Glade, so stone-tipped weapons are a valuable rarity. Metal weapons are all but unknown, the greatest treasures of all. Other weapons include nets, clubs, and bone daggers. Spears are favored above all else, for they work best in the watery environment of the bakali.

The bakali are ferocious warriors, able to fight with their weapons and their claws. Their hides are tough, giving them natural protection. Their greatest weaknesses are that they are sluggish at night, slow to react, and that they cannot venture too long from their life-giving water. These faults notwithstanding, the bakali are zealously recruited by the Thenolite army. They are assigned to commands advancing along river lines or are posted to guard duties at places where abundant water can be assured. It is rumored that Bishop Trandamere keeps a special bodyguard of bakali at Hawkbluff.

Thenolite commanders have found the bakali to be clever and eager to learn. While they have difficulty controlling their savage natures, particularly in battle, their amphibian abilities give the Thenolite commanders a surprising weapon when crossing rivers or breaching watery defenses.

There are things in the Blackwater Glade even deeper and more remote than the bakali. While some Swampers have dealings with the bakali and visit their primitive villages from time to time, perhaps no more than one or two humans have penetrated deeper into the glade. There, in the thickest portions of the swamp are low hills, cluttered with tumbled ruins that march out into the water, slowly submerging from sight. These ruins and the lakes around them are taboo to the bakali. They know that evil spirits, "saraki," wait to snatch up anyone foolish enough to violate the waters. At the same time the lure of the ruins is irresistible. Brave (and lucky) bakali that have entered the ruins and survived sometimes find great treasures—metal weapons and armor that fits their bulky frames.

There is a good reason the armor fits, for the ruins in the swamp are bakali-built, dating from that time millennia ago when the bakali were powerful and great. Then the bakali had the skills to build towns and rule lands. Just what caused them to abandon their towns and lose their skills is forgotten; even the bakali have only a dim idea of what they once were.

Not everyone is afraid of the saraki. Several of the ruins are now the abodes of dragons, Othlorx who seek solitude to raise their broods, perhaps in hopes of someday sweeping back over the world. Giant spiders and frogs skitter and hop about the ruins. Sometimes restless bones move, bones dead for more than a thousand years.

Although shunned by the bakali, the humans who have reached the interior have been fascinated by these ruins. A few attempts have been made to explore and study these, although such efforts are fraught with danger. In particular, the wizard Amrocar spent the better part of his life tracking down clues to the riddles the ruins posed.

This information, along with his maps, sketches, deductions, and speculations he noted in writing. Upon his death, the book passed into the Imperial Libraries at Kristophan where it has remained to this day. Amrocar was able to name the builders of the ruins and his maps are accurate—as of 100 years ago.

His deductions concerning the size of the Bakali Empire suggest that it must have once been very powerful and rich, a sure lure to treasure seekers. Most interesting are his speculations. He surmises the Bakali were exceptionally talented wizards, fabricators of magical potions, pills, and powders from natural materials. Most audacious (and least supported) of his beliefs is that the bakali of his age are not the same people as those of long ago. Instead, he maintains the dragonmen were the creations of the original bakali, creations that survived and prospered when the empire crumbled. However, his findings and his speculations have been long forgotten. His life's work sits in a musty niche of a dark corridor, among hundreds of thousands of other books, waiting for someone to find it and take an interest.

THE HULDERFOLK

The hulderfolk are elves, but not like any elves who have lived for more than 3,000 years. Found only in the small forests of Okami and the great woodland between the League and Thenol, the hulderfolk are secretive people. They do not freely reveal themselves to humans. They do not join armies. They do not build villages (that anyone has found). They do not go exploring to distant lands. They are the most mysterious of the elves.

The hulderfolk are elves who live by the old ways, ways so old that even the stiff-necked and tradition-bound Silvanaes abandoned these practices long before they left Silvanesti. Only the hulderfolk continue these practices, refusing to change even though the times have changed greatly.

The hulderfolk gain their name from the first and foremost of their traditions—shunning. Hulderfolk means "hidden people" in the tongue of ancient Taladas and that best describes shunning. Long ago the elves took slight to some act of the humans. Who did it or what they did has been long forgotten. What came of it was that the elven nation (for they were a united people back then) choose to forever forgo contact with the world of men. For a long time the elves disappeared from sight of man, not appearing in his records.

Yet man's inexorable expansion eventually doomed this policy, as more and more contact was forced between the two groups. The explicit code of shunning was forgotten, though the elves still kept the contact to a minimum, continuing the tradition without even realizing it—all except the hulderfolk.

At the heart of the hulderfolk shunning is the practice of not being seen. First, the elves do not mingle with humans. If humans settle in a hulder wood, the elves first attempt to drive them off, harassing them by stealing tools, loosing animals, and luring children into the woods. If these efforts fail or the hulderfolk fear discovery, they move away. As a result, their homelands have been steadily shrinking and their efforts to drive out the humans have become more and more violent. Where they once were content to mislead and lure away, now they use their spells to injure or terrify.

The second part of not being seen is the masterful camouflage ability of the hulderfolk. Living only in the deep woods, they are almost impossible to spot or hear. Indeed, bards describe their world as separate from the real world, crossable only at unknown invisible borders. While in truth it is not like this, the elves do seem to vanish before one's eyes, using their camouflage and their elven cloaks. The hulderfolk are skillful enough to walk around the farms of men without alarming the farmer or his animals. Only dogs seem to be sensitive to their presence.

While shunning forbids dealings with humans, it does not exclude tricking them. In fact such tricks are encouraged. This is another strong tradition of the hulderfolk. They take a great delight in luring hunters deep into the woods and leaving them there, inviting lost travelers to dinner or games, or posing as an absent husband or wife. With the dawn the hunter may find he has a stag's horns. The lost traveler spends the night and is courteously guided back to his path the next morning, only to discover a decade has passed in the world of men. The husband may learn he has sired a hulderfolk child.

The exact reasons for these tricks are unknown, but the effects are widely talked about, for they are bizarre and unusual. Most humans assume these tricks are some type of capricious and malicious humor. While other elves admit a certain irony in the whole thing, particularly the ones involving time, they deny the humor is somehow racial.

The tricks of the hulderfolk can be grouped into those of time, those of deception, and those of gifting. The tricks of time all follow the same pattern. The human enters a quiet clearing or ventures deep into the woods. There he meets a strange man or woman, one of the hulderfolk, who invites the human to come with them. The invitation may be to join the others in games, share a meal, or spend the night out of the storm. The guests always tell of the fine hospitality they receive. They are plied with marvelous food and drink and no one says ill of them. Usually they are overcome by sleep well before the others, exhausted by the entertainments of their hosts.

They awake to find themselves where the stranger first greeted them. Sometimes they have aged greatly. Their hair is long, their clothing faded and the rest of their gear worm-eaten and rusty. Other times they awake and nothing seems different. However, in all cases more time has passed than a single night. Through some secret magic of the hulderfolk, the flow of time has been altered for that human. Fortunate ones find they have been gone only a week; more often the victim comes back to discover he has been gone a year or ten years. There is a story told of one man who entered the woods a century before the Cataclysm and came out 200 years after it occurred!

Tricks of deception are much more subtle. The victims of these tricks are usually young men and women, particularly those handsome or attractive. The hulderfolk visits when the person is alone, usually coming in the evening. The elf may pose as a suitor come to court or a wife come to visit her husband minding the cattle in the high pastures. The trickster uses his natural grace to charm the victim, lulling any suspicions. Young women may be persuaded to run away and marry the handsome suitor or maybe just spend the night together. A wife may bear a child not at all resembling her true husband, while a husband may discover years later that the hulderfolk claim him as kin.

Sometimes the victim is tricked into swearing an oath. Once sworn, the hulderfolk consider the word binding and they expect it to be fulfilled. Such an oath may be as simple as moving a barn or swearing not to cut a certain tree, or it may be more complicated such as leaving the region or turning over the first-born child. Humans often foolishly enter into these oaths, believing them easily broken, only to discover that the hulderfolk

have magical methods of enforcement.

Tricks of gifting are the rarest of all, for they seldom start with that intention. Instead of whatever it intended, the elf winds up giving the human a valuable gift. On some occasions, the gift is given spontaneously by the elf. Sometimes the trickster is struck by the nobility, honesty, and spirit (the elves care little for human virtue) of the victim. He may be struck by her grace and beauty, dazzling even to the eyes of an elf, or smitten by his passion and romantic spirit.

Gifts that are granted freely tend to be particularly bittersweet, however, for some price seems unavoidable. A man may be shown a treasure but denied ever seeing his elf-love again. A bard may gain a wonderful voice, but go blind in the process. A farmer may succeed at all his efforts, but only after he has lost a son to the hulderfolk. For the fortunate the price is not as steep as this, perhaps only a lost year or the effort of performing some deed for the hulderfolk.

Sometimes the elf is trapped, caught by an intended victim cleverer than it. There are tales of maidens who saw through their suitors' disguises and then set a trap in return. There are mighty heroes (to the humans at least) who have gotten the better of the proud hulderfolk, but such heroes are very rare. In these cases the elf is forced to bargain for its freedom. Just as they consider the word of others binding, elves do not break their own oaths. Once forced to swear, they will abide by their own conditions.

The hulderfolk respect their oaths because shunning has its own rules and laws only vaguely understood by humans. These rules all make shunning more difficult for the elves. Perhaps when the tradition was begun the elves felt the need to give the poor humans a sporting chance. Perhaps shunning is only a game, little more than an exciting test of wits, of which they have so much more than the humans. Whatever the reasons, the hulderfolk follow strict rules concerning shunning.

A hulderfolk cannot break his word when given to the shunned. This is not a matter of the elf should not break his word. For the hulderfolk it is inconceivable not to honor an oath. It simply is not done. Only some of the rules (and therefore methods of protecting oneself) are known to humans. If touched by cold steel (which is more than ordinary metal), the elf must abandon any disguise and flee. It cannot enter a place of worship. If its name is spoken, it must flee and never return. Other laws of shunning may apply but they are known only to the hulderfolk, who do not go about telling these to others.

Shunning is not the only custom the hulderfolk keep alive. Another, more sinister one, is the practice of changelings. For mothers living on the edges of the hulderfolk lands, there is nothing more terrifying. The elves sneak to the cradle of a newborn and take the child, leaving a sickly elven babe in its place. It is a sight no mother wishes to ever see.

Like shunning, the practice of changelings has customs the hulderfolk must follow. Only newborn children can be taken and only sickly elven children can be left behind, which is the whole reason the switch is made in the first place. Enchantments are cast to disguise the child, but no amount of magic can perfectly hide the change from the mother or nurse. The stolen child is raised with love and care by the hulderfolk, although it is never accepted fully as one of their kind.

They also visit the elfchild left behind, leaving special elven gifts for the child. Nor do they forget the human families whose child has been taken. If the humans raise the strange changeling with care and love, the hulderfolk see to their success by secretly giving them aid whenever possible. The hulderfolk have a debt to repay. However, if the humans treat the elf-child badly, their luck is as bad as the elves can arrange.

The elves can also be compelled to take the changeling child back, although this is rare and there is no certain method. Sometimes humans abandon the child in the woods, whereupon the elves may return the human child. Sometimes the humans can make a bargain with the elves for the return of the child. There is no certain method of regaining a changeling child, however.

The elves keep to the old ways in dress as well. Their clothing is reminiscent of the time when the elves were truly Children of the Forest. The men wear cloaks of green leaves and wondrously supple cloth of bark. The elven women wear diaphanous gowns of spun spider silk and flowers, loosely draped in flowing forms around their slender bodies. Caps of leaves and garlands of flowers are the only ornaments they wear.

They do not mine metal and forge it only seldom; most of their implements are obtained in trade from the dwarves.



Since the Cataclysm this trade has all but ceased and now their swords and jewelry are of ancient design. This suits them just as well, for they have no desire to change. Those dwarves who know the hulderfolk dream of seeing the elven armory (which they are sure exists), for it surely contains brilliant of examples of dwarven workmanship done in the great styles of ancient times.

Elven warriors dress for war as they do for daily life. The only concession to danger that a hulderfolk might make is to don a shirt of light elven chain. Instead of thick protection, they prefer to rely on their invisibility and their speed. They are masters with the short bow and fine fencers, favoring lightweight blades to the heavy, slow swords of humans. Spears are also carried, being useful in all manner of situations.

Although the hulderfolk have a king and queen, they have no obvious government. There are no appointments, no elected officials, no titles, and few offices. Those positions they do have don't even seem to relate to governmental duties. There are, for example, offices for the Tale-Spinners, those elves called to sing at the banquets or on other, more melancholy days. The king and queen are served by a court, but none of the courtiers bear titles of any sort. In general the hulderfolk seem to rule themselves without the need for bureaucrats, ministers, police, or an army. Their disputes, more along the lines of personal spats, are settled by custom or by the king himself.

The hulderfolk make no villages or settlements. Their homes are carefully concealed by magic and are little more than sleeping quarters. They consider the entire wood their home, the sky their ceiling, and the grass their carpet. As such, the "home" of a hulderfolk may be nothing more than a hollowed tree trunk or an abandoned burrow. They do not live like animals, however. These nests are carefully built and even decorated. They simply view the necessities of life differently from humans.

Because of their customs, the hulderfolk are not overly loved by human settlers. The feeling is mutual, as the elves have no use for intruders. Since contact between the two has been infrequent, conflicts have seldom occurred. However, when the two races do meet, it is seldom uneventful. Aside from the tricks the hulderfolk attempt, the humans, who consider the elves to be evil and dangerous, treat them accordingly.

Ordinary peasants react in fear, not wishing to risk the ire of the hulderfolk. Braver or more foolhardy souls often attempt to capture or kill any hulderfolk they find. This in turn leads to retaliation by the elves, although they confine this solely to the offender and his family. It also confirms elvish opinion about humans. This behavior has been going on for decades, effectively preventing any understanding between humans and the hulderfolk.

The shunning attitudes of the hulderfolk apply almost exclusively to humans. Many other creatures share or enter the woods of the hulderfolk and have little trouble finding the inhabitants. They make no attempt (beyond practical caution) to hide from gnomes, goblins, hobgoblins, even dwarves, nor do they view these races as necessarily enemies, although they are not blind to the evil natures of some. Creatures such as hobgoblins are tolerated so long as they cause no harm.

Elves who enter their forest are greeted warmly as long-lost kindred and are always invited to stay. The gulf between the old ways of the hulderfolk and the modern ways of other elves is too great to cross, however. Neither can understand the other or accept what they have become. Thus, modern elves almost never come to live among the hulderfolk and the hulderfolk fear their sons and daughters will be lured away by the "good" life of their cousins. Marriages between the two groups often end sadly, adding more songs to the repertoire of the bards.

It may be that the hulderfolk have clung too long to a way of life that no longer makes sense. Things have changed around them and they have refused to follow suit. On the other hand, it may be that the rest of Taladas has lost something the hulderfolk still have—an innocence and simplicity that was destroyed centuries before the wrath of the gods destroyed the rest of their world.

The Steamwall

Blocking Southern Hosk from all of the east are the great volcanic mountain ranges collectively known as the Steamwall. For man and elf, this is a hostile, uninhabitable land. Clouds of corrosive steam roil up from the Indanalis topping the jagged rock peaks of the mountains. Here the steam mixes with ash and gas from the volcanoes of the Steamwall to form a hellish brew. Chilled at these heights, the steam and gas form rain clouds.

Most of the clouds are blown to the east to mingle with the poisonous fumes of Hitehkel, but some amount of rain falls on the mountain slopes, eroding away the lifeless rock. These rivulets turn to streams, black and poisonous, rushing down gullies past steaming vents, fumaroles, and bubbling mud pots. Eventually the waters form small rivers. These tumble down the mountains, spilling over waterfalls that reek of a sulphurous stench. The banks of these rivers are dead except for small clumps of red and gold mosses.

Gradually these rivers run through the strange and twisted forests that cover the lower slopes. Here flowers, trees, and even animals have been twisted and warped by the noxious air and water of the land. Oaks, mighty trees elsewhere, are gnarled and tortured. Brambles grow to immense size. Animals—bears, rabbits, squirrels, deer—sport strange deformities and ulcerous patches on their skin. Temperaments change. The meek become aggressive, the aggressive vicious. The rules of nature are turned upside down.

The rivers continue on through the land, carrying their poisons. Gradually the air and rain become cleaner, less noxious. Still the flowing waters cut swathes of death and distortion through the hills. Gradually the small rivers gather into large flows, forming the great deadly riv-

ers characteristic of the foothills of the Steamwall. As these flow toward the sea, the deadly water is gradually diluted as the poisons leach into the soil and fresh waters join the flow. Eventually these rivers, though brackish and sour-tasting, are no longer lethal.

Although hostile to men, the Steamwall and its foothills are not uninhabited. Many creatures, animals and intelligent beings live hidden on its slopes. Monsters of all types have chosen it as their homeland. Already fearsome, these beasts have been made even more dangerous by the harsh conditions of the mountains.

Monsters are not the only creatures found in the area. Intelligent beings have also struggled to make a home here. They are not pleasant beings. The most numerous are the hobgoblins that seem to thrive under the terrible conditions of the Mountains. Second numerous are the Marak kender, an off-shoot branch of that pestiferous race found in Ansalon. Life in the Steamwall has hardened them so they are much different from their kin. Finally, there are the 'Traldor Dwarves, beleaguered and struggling in the dark shadows of the peaks. They most of all have been changed by the upheavals of the Steamwall.

The Hobgoblins

The most successful of the Steamwall inhabitants are the hobgoblins. Under the most adverse of conditions they have thrived and prospered, growing stronger and more dangerous in the process. Fortunately for other races of the region, their lackluster intelligences keep them from exploiting the great advantage of their numbers. Even though they are generally stupid and disorganized, they are still a significant threat to travelers and small communities of the mountains.

Hobgoblins stand about six feet tall. Though normally burly and muscular, the hobgoblins of the Steamwall are scrawny fellows, the skin hanging loosely on their frame. Their skin is a deep red-brown. Their eyes are large and bloodshot. The males wear little clothing—nothing more than a loincloth. Females dress only slightly more modestly. Both sexes are fond of ornaments. These are usually of bone—fingers, hands, teeth, and toes from their victims. Other decorations include feathers, bright bits of cloth, pieces of gold, and beads. Most of their weapons are spears and knives of chipped stone, although they also have some metal weapons taken from their victims. When prepared for battle, they wear bits and pieces of stolen armor or breastplates made of bones.

The hobgoblins once lived in the caves of the mountains, but the earthquakes and volcanic activity of the mountains have made this impossible. Now they build simple long-houses, thatched and set on stilts to keep out dangerous vermin. The long-houses are cold and drafty, barely adequate shelter. Though cool in the summer, the houses, with their poorly-made roofs, offer little protection from the frequent rains. In winter, icy winds cut through the flimsy walls and strands of ice hang from the rafters. More than one house has burned to the ground during a freeze as the hobgoblins carelessly built fires inside to warm themselves.

The hobgoblins place great importance on their ancestors. After a hobgoblin dies, his skull is picked clean (large nests of ants are kept to do this). Then it is placed in a special niche at the front of the long-house. Old houses have entire front walls covered with the skulls of ancestors.

Taking heads is a sign of valor and worthiness. In battle, the hobgoblins normally try to bring back the heads of their enemies as trophies. These are also cleaned and then stacked in pyramids before the door of the long-house facing the ancestors. The more ferocious the family, the greater the pyramid of heads. Truly valiant and long-lived families may have several stacks of heads outside their long-houses.

Given this practice, the hobgoblins frequently go raiding. Their favored targets (mainly because they are close) are the Marak kender and the dwarves of the area, both of whom have a fierce hatred for the hobgoblins. Toward strangers such as merchants or explorers, the hobgoblins employ a slightly more tolerant approach. Although most expect them to attack on sight (having heard tales of their bloodthirstiness), the hobgoblins instead observe and greet strangers and even show them gracious hospitality. So long as the guests take care not to offend their hosts they will be treated as well as is possible for the hobgoblins.

In this way, the hobgoblins have managed to set up some trade with the outside world. Known merchants (who have dared to befriend the hobgoblins) venture into the edges of the mountains. There they trade their useful goods for the rare products of the mountains gathered by the hobgoblins, mostly exotic hides and plumes, although there are always strange ingredients needed by wizards. Sometimes the merchants come with specific requests to be filled—a stone from a certain place or sap of a twisted tree. The hobgoblins haggle the prices for their services and then venture out to fulfill their tasks.

The hobgoblins have never had any strong belief in a pantheon of gods, except for the spirits of their ancestors, They have a simple belief in an afterworld (it is a land just like the real world only without the enemies of their people and of a

judge who decides the fate of all spirits. Once this was Hiteh (Usk-Do in the hobgoblin tongue), but since the gods began to return to Taladas the position has been claimed by Erestem (Mwarg). The hobgoblins don't find this change confusing at all, for it is obvious to them that Mwarg overthrew Usk-Do in the after-world and thus became their new god.

THE MARAK KENDER

Living in isolated Marak valleys of the Steamwall, well down on the lower slopes, are a cluster of small kender communities. These kender (a race that is somewhat rare in Taladas) are unique in Taladas and perhaps throughout all of Krynn. They, perhaps more than any others throughout Taladas, have undergone a distinct change in their way of life.

Known as the Marak kender for the region of their birth, these kender are physically like the rest of their race, though perhaps a bit longer in the face. In dress they favor grays and blacks, colors that fade into the gloomy stone walls of the canyons that make up their homeland. The typical costume is a shirt, heavy trousers, and hard-soled moccasins. A hooded half-cape, permeated with wax or fat, is frequently worn since the weather is often foul and rainy. Although they grow their hair long, they bind it in tight, spiraling buns or head-hugging braids.

Their weapons, too, are very traditional for their people, although modified to their particular conditions. Living in the rocky mountains, they are experts at flinging stones. Lacking the stands of straight-limbed wood needed to make the sling-like hoopak, the Marak kender instead use the springier twisted wood of the Steamwall's forests to make bows for hoopaui or stone-bows. These weapons, similar to a crossbow, fire pellets carefully chosen for their size and shape.

In addition to the hoopaui, they also use short swords, spears, daggers, and axes. Perhaps because of their larcenous natures they seem to carry a great number of magical weapons, Most of the time they wear no armor in particular, relying on their natural ability to hide and camouflage. When they do gird for war, their armors are amazing collections of stolen, cast-off, and captured pieces—a helmet from a League legionnaire, the breastplate of a Thenolite, a full suit of pre-Cataclysm dwarven armor (liberally stuffed with pillows to fit the slimmer kender), or a Hitehkel gnome's breathing helmet and a bone breastplate taken from a hobgoblin. They present a tremendously interesting and amusing spectacle when arrayed for battle.

However, what truly makes these kender different from all others is their philosophies. Once the Marak kender were a carefree and happy-go-lucky race just like the rest of their kind. Their curiosity, humor, and cheerfulness were quite remarkable and infuriating. It seems they had retained the sense of innocence and childishness from the day that Reorx touched them to bestow his blessing, as the Marak say. Others, particularly the dwarves, agree that Reorx touched them all right, touched their wits and made them addled.

The Marak kender lived in a series of isolated and sheltered valleys. To the north were the humans of the Aurim Empire. To the east were the elves. Neither threatened the kender nor came too close to their safe lands. The hobgoblins presented only a minor threat. The kender believed they lived under the best of all protections in the best of all times. The good gods loved them like children and protected them from all evil. Then came the Cataclysm.

The Cataclysm unleashed on the cheerful, smiling kender horrors beyond any in their memory. Worse still, they were horrors wrought by the gods themselves. No man could rend all their homes or crash down the walls of their valleys onto entire villages. No elf could cause rains of ash for weeks, poisoning their water. No hobgoblin could light the sky with the glow of volcanic fires, heralding the scouring flows of lava. Only the gods could do such things.

Suddenly the gods the kender always knew as protectors had turned their backs and betrayed the faithful kender. They never imagined their punishment was accidental. For a time they blamed themselves, believing their innocent trust had somehow become wrongful pride. Not surprisingly, this view did not last as the kender came to blame the gods and not themselves.

Today, their friendly cheerfulness has vanished, replaced by grim suspicion. Although they remain incurably curious, it is the curiosity of fear and paranoia. They are curious not because they just want to know but because they want to know whether it will hurt or help them. If they meet a stranger, they want to know everything about him—who he is and what he has on him-to see if he presents a threat or danger. To this end they constantly peek, poke, and pilfer.

Their understanding of morals, especially regarding property, have not changed. Anything not nailed down is theirs if they want it. The rationalization has changed. Now they take things to "check them out." Caught with his hand in the pouch of a wizard, the Marak kender says, "I'm only making sure nothing in there is dangerous. Of course I kept this wand I found in there. After all, you might decide to use it against me sometime." The Marak naturally assume that everyone and everything is a potential threat against them.

Nor has their sense of humor totally abandoned them. It has, however, become a very black humor. They still delight in fun, defined as harsh practical jokes and mischief. The preferred targets of these jokes are outsiders, particularly non-kender. Failing that, the jokes are used as a method of revenge and comeuppance among the kender. They have developed an elaborate system of face based on who has last had the better of whom.

Kender society is built around strongly knit families and relations. Generally all those within a valley are related, tracing back to a common group of ancestors. The Cataclysm has strengthened the family bond of the kender to the point of fanaticism. Insults to the family are not tolerated and have been the cause of more than one murder. Long-standing feuds have been started by the slighting comments of one kender against the family of another. Meetings between the ken-



der of different valleys are strained and formal to avoid accidental insults by either side.

The kender live by working their small farms. Good lands in the Steamwall are rare. Fields close to the rivers needed to irrigate the fields are often dead, poisoned by those same rivers. Fields farther away are dry and often ash-choked. It takes much hard work to grow even poor crops in the soil, but nonetheless the kender try. This hardship too has added to their bitter outlook on life.

The fields are scattered widely throughout the valley floors, while the kender cluster in small villages for defense. The Marak are no builders, so the villages appear to be lightly fortified with a few simple walls of field stone. However, the kender, following their natures, have prepared rings of devious traps, harassing and deadly. Many times the hobgoblins have made assaults on kender viiIages only to break and run before ever reaching the stone walls that mark the edge of the village.

Aside from the attacks of lone creatures, hobgoblin raids are the greatest threat to the kender. Having learned by painful experience, the hobgoblins attempt to make raids on workers in the fields, well away from the deadly traps of the villages. However, sometimes they become ambitious and lay siege to a village, using special methods.

For days they will lay up in the hills overlooking the region, watching the movements of the kender, trying to see the routes in and out of the village. Once they are satisfied, they move in. The attack normally begins at night as the hobgoblins slip out of the mountains in small groups and encircle the town. Once the ring is closed, they begin the dangerous business of probing for the safest approach to the village. Scouts are sent out to search along the routes. More often than not, the hobgoblins fail to see all the traps. In their villages, the kender can hear the screams of the scouts as they "discover" undetected traps and by the noise know that the siege has begun.

What comes thereafter is a battle of wits. By night the hobgoblins probe and advance further along a safe route. During the day they lay up, ready to defend their newly won advances. By day and night, the kender seek to slip out and make new craps. By night the hobgoblins continue their probing, seeking out the new traps and attempting to advance farther toward the town.

The security of the kender depends on the effectiveness of these insidious defenses. It is rare for a kender village to have enough males to withstand a full hobgoblin assault. Once the hobgoblins clear a large enough route through to assault in force, the outcome of the battle is usually decided even before it begins.

Because the kender are known to be extraordinary collectors of things, it is assumed they have managed to collect great treasures. If they have, they certainly do not show it. They do not wear fine clothing, flash wonderful jewelry, or carry sharp steel weapons. This has led to the persistent rumor that the Marak kender are a race of misers, hiding their wealth away from all sight. Certainly their villages must have hidden storerooms filled with wonders beyond belief, or so the belief goes. Like all rumors, no one can actually say he has seen these things, but everyone has it on the best of authority that it is so. Even the kender have come to believe these rumors, always thinking the kender in the next valley are secretly hiding some powerful item.

Of course, what these rumors fail to take into account is just what the kender consider valuable. Even the hardships that changed their views on the world and life could not alter this. True, they do "collect" magical items and weapons, but only to prevent others from using these things against them. Bright baubles, odd bits of information, unreadable scrolls, and other things (that just might be potentially dangerous) are treasured as great finds. The treasure troves of the kender are likely to be overlooked by others who see only a pile of assorted junk.

THE FIANAWAR

The third major group of the Steamwall Mountains are the Fianawar, a tribe of dwarves found in the northern ranges near the Tiderun. Unlike the larger colony of Scorned Dwarves in Northern Hosk, the Fianawar live on the surface or at most just below it. They make their living digging ores out of open-pit mines and tending farms.

The Fianawar come from the same ancient stock as all the dwarves of Krynn—creations of Reorx to learn his secrets of the forge. When the Grathanich brought about the Scattering of the People, the Fianawar wandered south into the mountains that touched the very edge of the Aurim Empire. Here they carved their homes out of the low mountains, slowly

expanding these as they dug the mines in search of valuable iron ore. Aside from occasional battles with the hobgoblins or creatures stirred from the bowels of the earth, the lives of the Fianawar were peaceful and calm.

When the Cataclysm struck, it drove the Fianawar out from their underground world. The mountain plates tilted and heaved. Fiery lava surged through the mine shafts scouring them clean. The roofs of great caverns buckled, crushing entire communities. Vents spilt sulphurous fumes to roil through underground corridors, asphyxiating all caught within them. The dwarves had no choice but to flee to the surface.

At first the dwarves lived in rude camps near the entrances to their old caverns. Certainly, they felt, things would settle down soon and they would be able to return home. After a few weeks of volcanic displays, patrols ventured back in. They were never heard from again. The Fianawar were forced to wait even longer.

Over the next century, the dwarves attempted to return to the land underground several times. A few of these attempts met with immediate disaster—the passages explored were still dangerously volcanic. Floors collapsed into pits of boiling lava. Scalding, poisonous gases suddenly spewed from burst fissures. At other times the new settlements met with slow and evil disaster. A child would wander off, never seen again. Fire demons leapt out of flaming pools to seize victims. Attempting to reopen old mine shafts, miners died in streams of lava accidentally released. It was more than the Fianawar could take. Each time the survivors returned to the surface with new tales of horrors underground.

As a result, the Fianawar have been forced to make a life above-ground. Worse still, the failed attempts and the gruesome descriptions brought back by survivors have made instilled a mass terror in the people. After several centuries of failure, they have become afraid of the underground and no longer make major attempts to settle it. The Fianawar are resigned to life on the surface.

At the same time, the Fianawar are far from happy with life on the surface. They do not like the bright sunlight, the open expanse of sky, the cold rains, or even the blooming flowers of summer. They have little talent for farming, although they must to survive. They still manage to practice the arts of smelting and smithing, digging open-pit mines to reach surface deposits of ore, but this is little comfort to them.

The Fianawar live in small villages built close to the cliff walls that mark their old homelands. Their houses are squat structures, solidly built from blocks of stone in imitation of the caverns that were once their homes. The roofs are made of sod and the walls have few if any windows.

Each village is a cluster of houses, workshops, granaries, and stables. Smelters belch thick smoke as the dwarves stoke the fires to work the ore. Streams are rerouted to flow through the villages. The flowing water turns the wheels that drive the triphammers beating out the metal. Farther down it carries away the effluents and garbage of the villagers. Outside the towns are mounds of cinders and slag, the tailings from the smelters. Beyond these are the scraggly fields of the farmers. Beets, turnips, rutabagas and other good, solid root vegetables fill the rows of the fields.

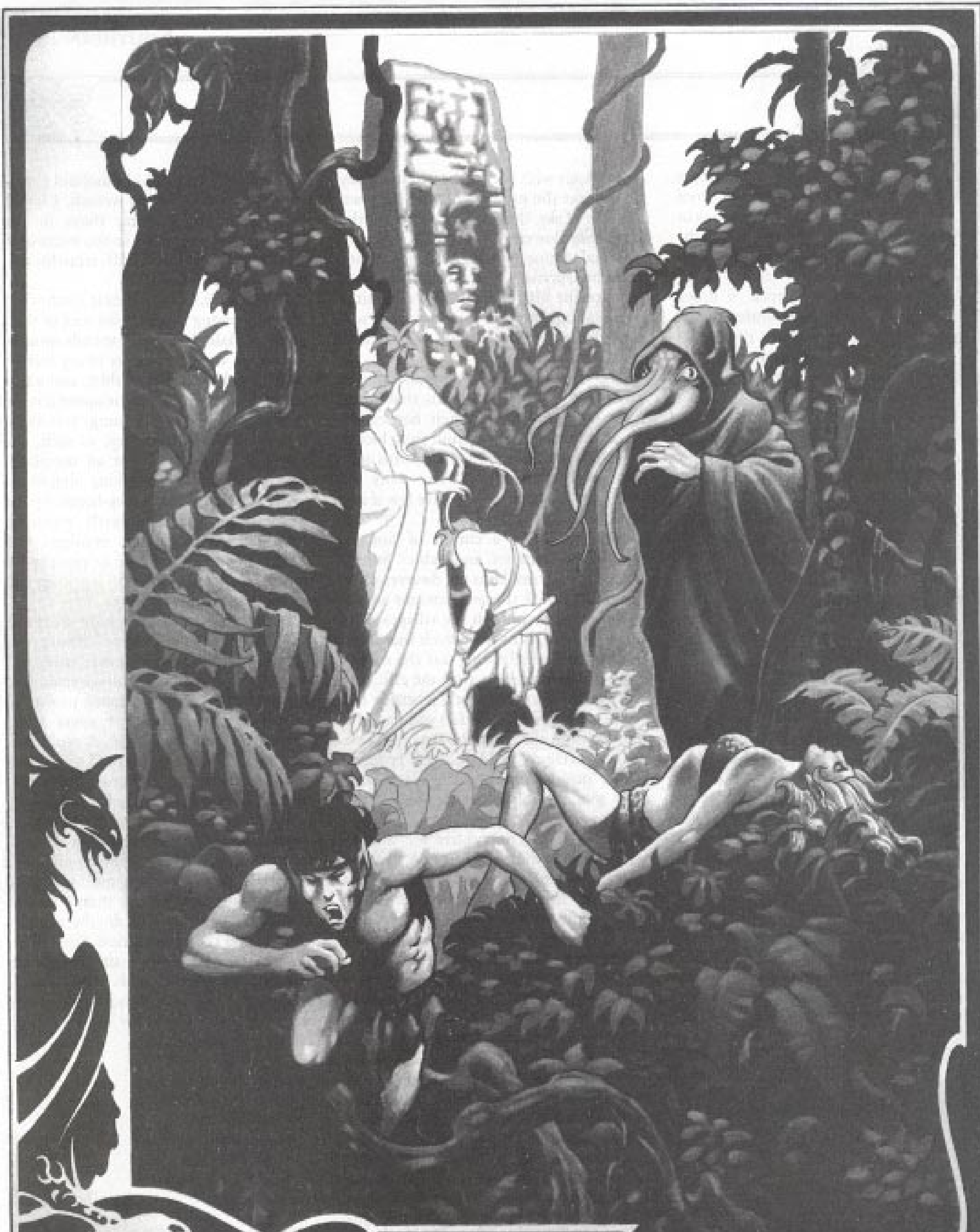
The Fianawar themselves are a dour band. To non-dwarves they look like any other of their kind, short-legged stocky fellows with long beards and unsmiling faces. To other dwarves they are quite distinctive. They stand slightly taller and leaner than others of their kind, though their muscles are gnarled and hard. They have fairer complexions than most, if their skin can be seen under the layers of dirt and coal smoke.

The Fianawar are not the cleanest people in the world. With the waters that flow down from the Steamwall being what they are, the Fianawar seldom bathe. Soap is almost unknown. Nor are their table manners particularly good. Knives and bowls are the only tableware. Most meals are eaten with the fingers from a common pot. Beards and aprons are used as napkins. Scraps are thrown on the floor, tidbits for the household pets—usually ferrets or tamed weasels. Clothes are washed by beating them in the streams. The chemicals in the water only serve to make the cloth stiff, scratchy, and sulphurous-smelling.

Fortunately, most of their clothes are leather, sparing travelers the reek of their garb. A male dwarf who spends most of his day at the forge wears heavy leather pants, thick boots, linen shirt, and a stiff leather apron. For men, the apron is more than a piece of work clothing. It is also a sign of position and duty; as such, the apron is worn on almost all occasions. Dwarven women wear long dresses of white linen, stained yellow-brown by the waters, embroidered with mythical scenes. These are often smudged and soiled, but the good wife or prospective bride goes to great effort to keep her clothing spotlessly clean.

For battle, the dwarves have one great advantage over their neighbors—an abundance of skillfully made metal armor and weapons. Each village assembles and maintains its own armory, providing complete equipment for every able-bodied male of the village. A typical armory has a mixture of field plate and chain mail armors, along with leaf-headed boar spears and hefty swords.

Rank generally determines who wears what, although valor in battle is also recognized. The heavy (noble) infantry dresses in elaborate plate mail, while the lowest soldier has no less than a suit of chain mail. All use shields, the size depending on the arms carried. Lighter infantry (those wearing chain mail) carry spears and small shields that can be strapped to the arm without interfering with the spear. The heavy. infantry wield swords and large shields.



THE FISHERIES AND NERON

In the age before the Cataclysm, Neron was famed as a great untracked wilderness. It was a place where men did not live. No man explored it, indeed no man even knew what might be found there. Its coasts were only partially charted and no maps at all existed of its interior. It was known there were jungles and strange beasts, but beyond that there might be anything.

Like all else of Taladas, Neron was shattered by the explosion of the Cataclysm. Like all the other lands it suffered the drastic changes of new mountains, volcanoes, and sunken lands. Of all these changes, the creation of the Fisheries were the greatest. When the southern channel to the Indanalis was ripped open, the flooding waters from the Windless Sea swept through the widening fissures that split the swampy plain dividing Southern Hosk from Neron. The massive tidal waves gouged out the channels, driving great walls of mud before them. The mud and debris snagged up on anything that would hold it. Gradually thick dams were created and the Fisheries, a cluster of low islands, once part of Neron, were born.

The Fisheries are now a group of subtropical islands, barely above sea level. The shorelines are thick mangrove swamps amid which rise silty mounds of dry land. Sea water flows and mingles with the streams of fresh water from inland. Most of the islands are like this throughout their area, treacherous mixtures of dry land and bog, the boundary between each vague and changing with the monsoon rains. Tropical orchids, lilies, and other brilliant flowers fill the swamps and the trees, concealing deadly serpents and brilliantly colored birds.

The lush jungle growth of these islands provides more than just a haven for exotic birds and animals. The shallow channels that run through the Fisheries are fertile spawning grounds for millions of fish. It is these fish that provide the food and livelihood for the humans and humanoids who live among the islands, for the Fisheries are not completely deserted.

Scattered throughout the islands are small villages of fishermen. Most are human settlements, men and women who trace their ancestry back centuries before the Cataclysm. In those ages they were hunters and nomads, roaming the great plain of Neron. Since the creation of the Fisheries, they have adapted to a seagoing life, learning the arts of canoe building and fishing. Their skill has reached the point where they are daring to venture beyond the sheltered channels of the Fisheries and into the broader ways of the Windless Ocean itself.

Not all the fishermen of the Fisheries are human, however. Other inhabitants of the Neron plain were also forced to adapt to the ways of the water. Thus, among the channels are small populations of hobgoblins, goblins, and elves. Of these, the hobgoblins have been the most successful. Like their human neighbors, the hobgoblins have become skilled builders of canoes and catamarans and use their skills to fish and raid. The goblins have been more hapless and timid in their sailing, making their efforts on the water almost comical. While the elves of the Fisheries have the talents to be master boat builders, they lack the ambition. Most of the few elf villages look inland, the capricious elves fascinated by the riotous and exotic abundance of nature.

Neron, to the east, is all verdant jungle and wild beasts. Of the empty lands of eastern Taladas, it is the most populous; most of the inhabitants live deep in the jungles of the western side. Rising quickly from the low coast along the Fisheries, the heart of Neron becomes a rugged highland jungle. Though the land never reaches to great heights (except along the backbone), the hills are steep and razor-edged, covered with thick forests of mahogany and teak.

Fast-flowing rivulets rush down the slope, tumbling into the rivers that fill the narrow valley floors. These rivers in turn roar through the narrow gorges, flowing to the lowlands of the east. Here the collection of waters slows and eddies into the Great Reed Delta, an uninhabited and unexplored swamp with which no man is familiar. This coastline is continually battered by huge tropical storms and hurricanes.

And yet beyond this coast, resisting the onslaught of the waves, are the fiercely independent people of Baltch. Split off from the rest of Neron in the Cataclysm, the Baltchians survived the nightmare of Hiteh's Night on their own skills and resources. They have stubbornly refused to surrender and have turned their island into a fortress against the forces of nature. Baltch is a low-lying island, barely above sea level; great storms have more than once threatened to sweep it away. It is only through a series of massive engineering projects—great dikes, breakwaters, and canals—that the people of Baltch have managed to survive.

Inland, in the steaming forests of Neron, live the Wild Elves, dangerous but noble savages. Little is known of this people. Few travelers choose to venture into the heart of the Neron jungles, nor are the few who dare welcomed openly by the naturally shy and suspicious Wild Elves. Thus contact with them is infrequent and dangerous. The culture of Aurim never reached into this vastness and those peoples about to step out of their infancy and become kingdoms were cast down in the darkness of Hiteh's Night. Neron has reverted to barbarism.

In addition, travelers must contend with giant poisonous spiders, huge lizards, snakes, hobgoblins, ogres, and the sinister yaggol. The yaggol are only myths and bogeymen to outsiders, used to scare children. Yet, the Wild Elves stoutly maintain these evil creatures are quite real and both fear and hate them with equal passion.

THE PAYAN MAKO

The largest island of the Fisheries is Syldar, home of the Payan Mako, the most populous of the human villages in the Fisheries. Although there are other settlements, both human and nonhuman, on Syldar, the Payan Mako are considered to be the de facto rulers of the

island, although there is no government as such. They control the selection of the fishing waters, new settlements, and even the territories of the charcoal burners in the forests.

The Payan Mako are a short people, averaging about five feet in height. Although not large-boned, their bodies have a generous layer of fat. Their skins are a deep bronze and are almost entirely hairless. Men shave their heads as a matter of custom and hygiene. Women wear theirs closely cropped.

Since the Fisheries are a tropical land, clothing is kept to a minimum. Men most often wear a simple loincloth of pounded bark and fish skin. Women wear a larger sarong of bark cloth, stamped with inked designs and patterns. Young children are most often naked. Shoes or sandals are not commonly worn. In battle the men carry rectangular shields of woven palm fiber. Since most fighting is a result of sea raids, few wear any other armor. However, those wishing to show off their wealth and prestige may have a breastplate made of bone and shell or even a suit of metal armor taken or traded from an explorer or traveler. Spears and short bows, both of which use shark teeth or sharpened shells for heads, are employed as everyday weapons, but each warrior also has a set of prized metal-edged weapons used for formal battles and special occasions.

The Payan Mako live simply. They have few ambitions to conquer their neighbors or explore beyond their known boundaries. This means, however, that they are fiercely protective of those boundaries, as everything within them is their territory. Neighboring villagers (who are equally as defensive about their lands) know the limits and prudently avoid entering the territories of the Payan Mako.

Strangers who enter the villages of the Payan must be careful not to antagonize the villagers, lest they prompt an attack. Entering a village without warning, coming in large numbers, or carrying weapons are all likely to anger or upset the villagers. Experienced traders anchor their ships just offshore and enter the lagoon of the village in a small boat. The chief usually sends a canoe to meet the boat and ascertain its business. Once this is done, the ship is welcomed into the harbor. Of course, this is only the way it is supposed ***to*** work. More than one captain has met his end when the villagers didn't care for his friendly overtures and came out to visit his small boat in force.

The villages of the Payan are typical of all the villages of the Fisheries. The houses are clustered on a low rise of land, close to the beach. Each house is set on legs five to six feet tall. The posts are studded with sharp pieces of shell and serve as protection from both high water and the giant rats that come out at night. The houses are built of various woods and thatched on the sides and roof with palm. The floor is covered with thick mats and a fire pit is built into the center. This fire is not used for cooking, which is done outside, but provides light and thick smoke to drive away insects. Sometimes it also provides warmth on the infrequent cold nights. A simple pole ladder is used to enter. This is pulled up at night to keep out rats, snakes, and enemies. Among the sleeping houses are also granaries, built in the same fashion. These store dried fish and fruits, as very little else is harvested on the islands.

The Payan are fishermen, seldom venturing very far inland. Indeed, their main reason for going inland is cut a large tree for a canoe. These canoes, some up to 40 feet long, are dugouts fitted with an outrigger or sometimes two. All are capable of raising a simple sail of palm thatch. In these canoes the men sail out long distances into the channels of the Fisheries, sometimes gone for a week or more. Upon their return they bring back fish to be eaten fresh or dried and smoked for later use.

Aside from the occasional disputes with their neighbors, the Payan have no rivals to contend with. Although they call the hobgoblins "demon-men" (and the goblins steal their children), they are not particularly afraid or hostile toward this race. In turn, the hobgoblins are content to raid other, more vulnerable villages and leave the Payan in peace. The elves of the Fisheries they have no contact with and only know of them through stories and legends. The only threat to the Payan chiefs, as it is a threat to all the people of the Fisheries, are the shark men.

THE SHARK MEN

A recent arrival in the Fisheries, appearing only in the last three decades or so, is the secret cult of the shark men. This evil group has managed to spread like a cancer throughout the islands of the Fisheries, attracting followers to its dark cause. Led by priests empowered by Erestern, the shark men seek to crush and subjugate all the tribes of the islands. Unknown, even to themselves, they are another branch of Evil's efforts to rule and dominate Taladas.

As a secret society, the shark men do not advertise their presence in a village until they are in complete control. The members of the cult come from all walks of life, but are most often blackguards and ne'er-do-wells to start with. While it is impossible to identify a shark man in everyday life, they are easily identified when dressed in the trappings of their cult. Each man makes a mask-headdress-war helmet in the shape of a killer shark, his own face looking out through the fearsome jaws of the monster. Over his shoulders he wears a cape of sharkskin and instead of weapons he wears gauntlets set with razor-sharp shark teeth in the hand. Victims of the shark men are normally found washed up on the shores of the lagoon, savagely ripped and shredded by the claws.

In their goal to dominate the villages of the Fisheries, the shark men follow a basic pattern. As the cult spreads into a new area, agents of the cult, usually men from a nearby village, begin recruiting new members. At first those recruited are the dissatisfied and the scoundrels of the village. Lured by promises of power and importance, such men are easily recruited. Once this is done, tales of the power, importance, and wisdom of the shark men are spread. A priest-leader arrives and holds secret meetings, using his spells to demonstrate the miraculous power of the cult and draw in new recruits.



Once the cult becomes established, it turns to deal with dissenters through a campaign of terror. Chosen critics are ritually murdered, both to terrify the others and bind the local members closer to the cult. The mutilated bodies are left for others to find with a shark tooth as a symbolic threat.

After a few deaths, less vocal opponents receive ominous warnings, usually a bloody shark tooth hung from the doorpost of the lodge house. Villagers are told to hang shark teeth or jaws from their roof-poles as a sign of allegiance or suffer harm. Those who refuse are slaughtered or their properties are destroyed. This binds most of the people to the shark men. Finally, when the majority of the population is cowed, the shark men openly enter the village and challenge the authority of the elders. Some chiefs and elders readily submit, while others accept the challenge. This usually results in death for the elders, but in some cases the villagers (finally given a tangible target) throw off their fear and drive the cultists out.

These methods have enabled the shark men to spread quite effectively throughout the southern parts of the Fisheries. They have managed to get a strong toehold onto Syldar, challenging the authority of the Payan Mako. However, here they have met strong resistance. The chiefs, wizards, and shamans of the Payan, being all one people, have organized to fight back. No longer are the shark men preying on isolated, unsupported villages. For the first time they are attempting to overcome a network as organized as they are. The secret struggle between the Payan and the shark men will certainly last for many years to come.

The Wild Elves of Neron

Certainly the most secluded people in Taladas and perhaps the most barbaric are the Wild Elves of Neron. Although they share the same designation as the Kagonesti of Ansalon, the Wild Elves of Neron (known as the cha'asii) make the Kagonesti seem like gentrified squires.

Cha'asii appearance is startlingly different. They are a small race, averaging about 4'9" in height. Rare is the individual who reaches five feet. Their bodies are slender and well-proportioned for their height. Their hair is dark brown to a dark green-black and their eyes are deep forest green. Most notable is their skin, which seems to reflect the colors of the jungle from deep wood brown to shades of green.

A savage people living in the warm jungles, the cha'asii wear little in the way of clothing and what little they wear is similar to their kin the hulderfolk. Males go most often naked or with a simple loincloth of woven leaves, while females wear a barely modest covering of leaves. During the rainy season, they weave simple rain capes from grasses and palm fronds. Under the hot sun it is typical to improvise a quick, simple hat from a palm frond.

In addition to their clothing, the cha'asii love bright decorations. Both sexes make and wear necklaces of exotic feathers, earrings of shells, and hair ornaments of carved bone. Along with steel

weapons, brightly colored ribbons and trinkets are prized treasures of the cha'asii. This is not because they are simple-minded. Those who deal with the outside world are perfectly aware of the power of money; it's just that they have no use for it.

The weapons of the cha'asii are particularly suited to their world. The thick jungles make most long-range weapons, such as powerful long bows, impractical. The cha'asii use some small, light-weight short bows but more often favor carefully lacquered blowguns. Slashing weapons such as swords are also impractical for combat, since they are too easily tangled in the thick undergrowth. Throwing javelins and heavy thrusting spears are the weapons of choice for warfare.

Large outcroppings of workable ore or hard stone are rare, so most of their weapons (and tools) are made from the wood of the irontree, elaborately carved, polished, and sharpened. Much use is made of other natural materials, too. Blowgun darts are made from the five-inch thorns of the *inya* vine, whittled to barbed heads.

Throwing bombs are another favored weapon of the cha'asii. A crude gas bomb is made by stuffing the cleaned bladders of monkeys with certain noxious fruits. These are then allowed to ferment in the sun and swell up with the rotting gases. Once ready they are carried in gourd cases until needed. When it bursts, a bladder fills an area with a foul stench intolerable to nearly all animals and effective for foiling creatures that track by scent.

Hornets' nests, collected at night inside leather bags, are used to drive off dangerous monsters, flush beasts out of dens, and cast enemies into confusion. Inya vines, woven into balls, are carried on strings inside bags. These are used like caltrops or are hung from low branches and concealed by leaves to act as traps. What metal weapons they have are prized treasures, valued more often as tools than actual weapons.

The cha'asii are also skillful herbalists and have the pharmaceutical wonders of the jungle at their finger tips. They can prepare salves that speed healing, poultices that draw out inflammations and poisons, powders to relieve headaches, potions to bring forgetfulness, and subtle juices to bring sleep. They eschew the use of poisons and the art of poison-making is taboo. However, they have no qualms about dipping their darts in sleeping juice or building fires to carry sickness smoke (which causes fierce bouts of nausea) into the camps of their enemies.



The herbalism of the cha'asii is much more than just an minor, though interesting, aberration because of their exceptional skill in the arts of nature magic. The cha'asii have mastered the arcane secrets of their homeland. Many of their people are able to cast magical spells and among them there is an almost universal specialization in spells of nature.

This specialization is far different from the "known" schools of magic, those divided according to the theories of principle. The cha'asii view magic differently from all others, seeing the source of all magical energy as either coming from nature or from unnatural sources. To their minds, the differences of conjuration versus abjuration versus enchantment are nothing more than differences in methodology. They instead key in on the source, use, or constructions of the magic cast and these identify it as natural or unnatural. The cha'asii have no use for unnatural powers—something they equate with the yaggol—and thus rare is the cha'asii wizard who learns something other than natural magic.

Another aspect of their philosophies of magic is that every thing is imbued with hidden magical energy. A wizard does not create a magical item by instilling it with energy, instead he invokes it by bringing out the hidden power within it. Thus creating a magical item requires that the wizard learn what power is within the item that can be tapped. The more aesthetically perfect the item, the purer and more powerful the magic. Perhaps this is a better understanding of the magical creation process, for the cha'asii are masters of the art. Around the fires, the chanters sing the old legends about the great wizards who could bring out the magic of a thing simply by touching it.

Whatever the method, the cha'asii make many magical items, most of them unfamiliar to the outside world. A wondrously shaped tree, a naturally veined and rounded pebble, a colored turtle shell, all of these can become magical items in the hands of the cha'asii wizards. The very forest around a cha'asii village is alive with magical creations of the wizards—enchanted vines, stones, and flowers.

Of course, such an approach has its limitations. Foremost of these, at least in the belief system of the cha'asii, is that the wizard has no control over the power hidden within the item; he can only

bring forth what was in it. Certain items may have relatively consistent properties, but effects could also be widely different between two similar items.

Part of a wizard's training is to learn the different categories of things and what magic each is likely to contain. He must learn to recognize the different types of plants, the small signs that differentiate between stones, and so on. It is said throughout the League and elsewhere that great wizards are born with the magic in their eyes; in the jungles of Neron it is said a great wizard is born able to see the magic through his eyes.

The cha'asii live in small groups in the deep jungle. Since they live by hunting, the groups are widely scattered through the jungle valleys. Nonetheless, the groups all share a close feeling of kinship. In their tales there are no accounts of one family ever attacking another. Those in the village are members of the same family or sometimes several families. Males and females are considered equal. Tasks are divided between both and, with the exception of child-bearing, there is little difference between the two sexes. Females are welcomed as warriors and hunters and are often fiercer than their male counterparts.

From life the cha'asii seem to ask little. Their homes are simple grass huts built on the ground or in the broad spreading branches of trees that grow along the streams and rivers. The huts are arranged around the central fire pit where the cooking and feasting is done. Some time each day is spent in hunting or tending the small gardens nearby, but most of the day is spent lazing in the heat. During this time they work on wood carvings and repair their equipment.

Their carvings are works of art, combinations of intricate detail and natural grains and curves. These carvings, along with the exotica of the forests, are desired by those few traders who have found and befriended the cha'asii. In exchange the elves receive trade goods such as jewelry, knives, cloth, pots, and magical spells. This last item commands great prices, but many traders have received interesting rewards for the spells they provide.

Given the apparent simplicity of the cha'asii, it is usually assumed that they have always been a primitive and barbaric people. Some, upon finding the strange ruins that crop up in the jungle, assume that the cha'asii were once the masters of these ruins and have culturally regressed. The cha'asii singers have another answer in their secret songs. (Through these the singers tap the power of nature to cast spells and thus the songs are kept secret to prevent dilution and weakening of the great magic they contain.) These songs suggest the cha'asii did not regress but advanced, reaching the stage where they chose to abandon the trappings of civilization to return to harmony with nature. It is certainly true that the cha'asii are more a part of the jungle than just villagers trying to live in spite of or off of the jungle.

Sometimes the traders ask about the strange ruins found in the region, massive halls of stone-like wood. Vines wrap around fallen pillars, insects swarm over eroded carvings, saplings crack through the floors, steaming rays of sun shine through the fallen roofs. It is clear the cha'asii never built these places. To answer the questions, the cha'asii shake their heads and say they do not know, but their eyes belie their words.

In truth the cha'asii know much more about the ruins in the jungle, for these have an important place in their secret songs. These songs tell of a time when the ruins were home to the ancient ancestors of the cha'asii. At one time the ruins were part of a great empire, more enlightened and far older than the Empire of Aurim. It was an empire of the elves from the very beginning of time. It ruled in a time before men began writing histories. Indeed it is so ancient that even the wizards of the League, noted for their long memories and curiosity about things long-forgotten, do not know its name or location. All that remains are the halls, built of a wood so strange that it has outlasted stone and withstood the darkness of the Cataclysm.

The songs also tell of the cha'asii and their duties as the protectors and caretakers of the wood halls. It could be they created this responsibility themselves in a complex web of taboos and awe. It might also be as they claim, that the last dwellers in those halls charged the cha'asii with the responsibility of protecting the halls until they returned. Whatever the reason, it is a duty they accept with great solemnity and reverence.

Many travelers have fallen prey to the lure of treasure the mysterious halls offer, but all have run afoul of the cha'asii. Some have survived this encounter, most have not, but those who have sometimes bring back strange magical items that made the risk worthwhile—swords with great powers, magical cloaks in spotless condition after 2,000 years in mildew-festering heat, or cups and bowls that when filled offer terrifying yet realistic glimpses of other worlds.

Because of this duty and because of the threat of the yaggol, the cha'asii are a hostile people. Strangers are not welcome among them and winning their trust requires extraordinary patience and tolerance for a human. Living the long lives of elves, the cha'asii seldom hurry in anything. A new trader attempt to contact them may have to wait for years, during which time they watch him without ever once approaching. Only after they are satisfied will they approach.

Fortunately most of the traders are carrying on work started by their fathers, simplifying things somewhat. Few new traders can manage to do business with the cha'asii. Even after being accepted, strangers are always treated with extreme formality. A trusted human visit to a camp means there will be dancing and a feast, but there will not be familiarity.

Those who attempt to force their presence on the cha'asii, in numbers large or small, are be greeted by death. The cha'asii simply do not like strangers. Of course, there are exceptions. Should an outsider save the life of one of the cha'asii, he may be accepted by that family. More importantly, any who fight against the yaggol earn the respect of the cha'asii.

The yaggol are the sworn enemies of the cha'asii and the two races have been warring in their own way for centuries.

The yaggol are a race of mind flayers, a isolated group that has slid into decadent barbarism more savage than their already depraved natures. They lurk in underground colonies and in the thickest areas of the forest where sunlight never reaches the forest floor.

Dressed in nothing but loincloths made from the hides of their victims, they use only their formidable mental powers and their taloned hands to feed their loathsome appetites. Driven by their desires to dominate and their contempt for all other life, the yaggol do not just prey on the Wild Elves; they also terrorize and taunt them. Bodies are grotesquely staked to trees or floated downstream past their home village. Victims are horribly tortured for days, their screams floating over the jungle for families and relatives to hear night after night. The cruelty of the yaggol and the pleasure they derive from it is beyond description.

BALTCH

Separated from the mainland since the Cataclysm, the people of Baltch have been forced into a battle for survival unique among all the lands of Taladas, even Krynn. Their foe is not dragons, not the fiery hordes of Hitehkel, nor even the volcanic forces from the earth's interior. Their enemy is persistent, uncaring, and unconquerable. The people of Baltch are locked in a never-ending battle against the sea.

The people of Baltch are an ordinary-looking lot. Men and women are neither tall nor short and tend to be a little on the plump side. Their faces are tanned and weatherbeaten by the constant assaults of sun and salt air. Men grow full beards and mustaches and women wear their straight hair long and loose.

Clothing is made from cotton grown on the island and brightly dyed in patterns of yellows, reds, oranges, and blues. A peasant's dress in the field would be short pantaloons, easily pulled up above the knee, and a loose, short-sleeved jacket. Women wear a similar pair of pants when working, but wear a tight-fitting, high-collared blouse. Out of the field, men and women prefer floor-length flowing robes of cotton. Headgear is most often a scarf or headband, although brightly decorated hats of straw are also worn. The upper class wear several layers of loose cotton robes, dyed and printed in clashing patterns. A sash draped over the shoulders identifies officials of the bureaucracy according to their rank and office.

During the Cataclysm, Baltch was split from the mainland of Taladas. At the same time, the continental plate that supported both the Reed Delta and Baltch subsided a considerable distance. What had once been upland plain suddenly became swampy lowlands, barely above sea level. Now Baltch and its people live in continual danger of being washed away in one of the ferocious hurricanes that sweep out of the southeast.

Fortunately, the Baltchians are not totally defenseless in this war. Even before the Cataclysm they were known for their engineering skills. They supplied many of the master builders who erected the monuments of Aurim, the great bridges and roads that linked the distant corners of the empire. Their hands guided the building of the old capital, Amoushek the Golden, with all its towers and palaces. When disaster struck and the land sank, it was not long before they realized the need for protection from the sea.

Their solution has been to create the Seawall, a system of dikes, canals, breakwaters, and levees. Beginning on the seaward side, the Seawall has gradually come to enclose all but a tiny portion of the island. This small gap remains as both a drainage flow and their largest port, opening into the strait between Baltch and the Reed Delta. The Seawall cannot stop the storms, but through careful planning it blunts their force. The towering waves tear across the breakwaters, slowly losing force while the canals drain the water away from the settled lands. Dikes in series protect the farmlands that lie below sea level.

All of this requires constant maintenance. A lapse of vigilance can be fatal. If a weakened dike is ignored, hundreds of homes could be destroyed in a single night. Thus the people have formed corps to repair and extend the works of the Seawall. Each corps is responsible for a certain area or a certain task and is held accountable for the success or failure of the Seawall. To be the commander of such a corps is both a great honor and a great responsibility.

But such things as Seawalls and engineering corps do not spring into existence by themselves. There has been a price, perhaps more grievous to some than others. The people of Baltch have had to submit to the absolute rule of the Master Engineer, the leader of the nation. Under his guidance, life in Baltch is more controlled and regimented than anywhere else in Taladas. Each inhabitant of the island is a citizen and the birth and death of every citizen is recorded in the Great Registry. Here wizards use their spells to locate and record all the information needed to fuel the great bureaucracy of Baltch.

Under the Master Engineer, the citizens of Baltch have submitted themselves to a thorough accounting of their lives. In



addition to births and deaths, each citizen must register in the town where he lives, list his occupation, and the size of his household. A citizen can move or change jobs only by obtaining the appropriate permit. Land ownership is naturally recorded and new land, cleared forests or drained swamp, must be surveyed and approved by the Engineers from the capital. Every citizen is assigned to a work gang and required to work on the canals for a set number of days each year.

The organization of the government reflects this obsession with the Seawall. Some of the more powerful offices include the Grand Surveyor, the Ministry of Excavations, the Ministry of Prediction (for weather), the Commander of the Quarrymen, and the Commander of the Outer Dikes. There are also more normal posts including the Admiral of the Fleet, the Lord Assessor, the Lord of the Treasury, and the Steward of the Master's Household.

The ruling class of the island is made up of the Engineers. These men are trained at the university in various engineering sciences. Beyond the arts of geometry, mathematics, reading, writing, and architecture, their training also includes more unusual topics, such as strategy, assessment, law, and rhetoric. Engineers are expected to be more than just builders. They also serve as commanders of the armies, clerks, judges, heralds, tax collectors, and ambassadors. The Engineers fill all the important government posts.

The Engineers are assisted in their duties by the Recorders, wizardly assistants. These men use their arts to handle most of the paperwork created by the bureaucracy and serve as advisors to the Engineer lords. The advisors tend to specialize in greater divination; the wizards in the field are more often specialists in alteration, an art useful in manipulating the stone for the builders.

The wizards have such titles as Grand Registrar, Master of Storms, Assistant Commander of the Outer Dikes, and Finder of the Hidden (a master tax-collector). Like the Engineers, the wizards attend special universities to learn their arts. Here they are taught to understand the effects of the moon gods on their powers and to select their specializations in much the same way others select master's degrees.

Although many of the Engineers are trained soldiers, there is no standing army. On an island far from other civilizations, they have had little need to defend from invasion. On those rare occasions when an army is needed, the Engineers raise the work gangs and arm them as militia. While the peasants are poorly trained as soldiers, the experience gained in mobilizing for storm repairs is equally applicable to the muster of the gangs for troops. The Engineers may have poorly trained armies, but they can raise huge numbers and amass them in one spot in record time. This has been enough to deter or defeat any foe.

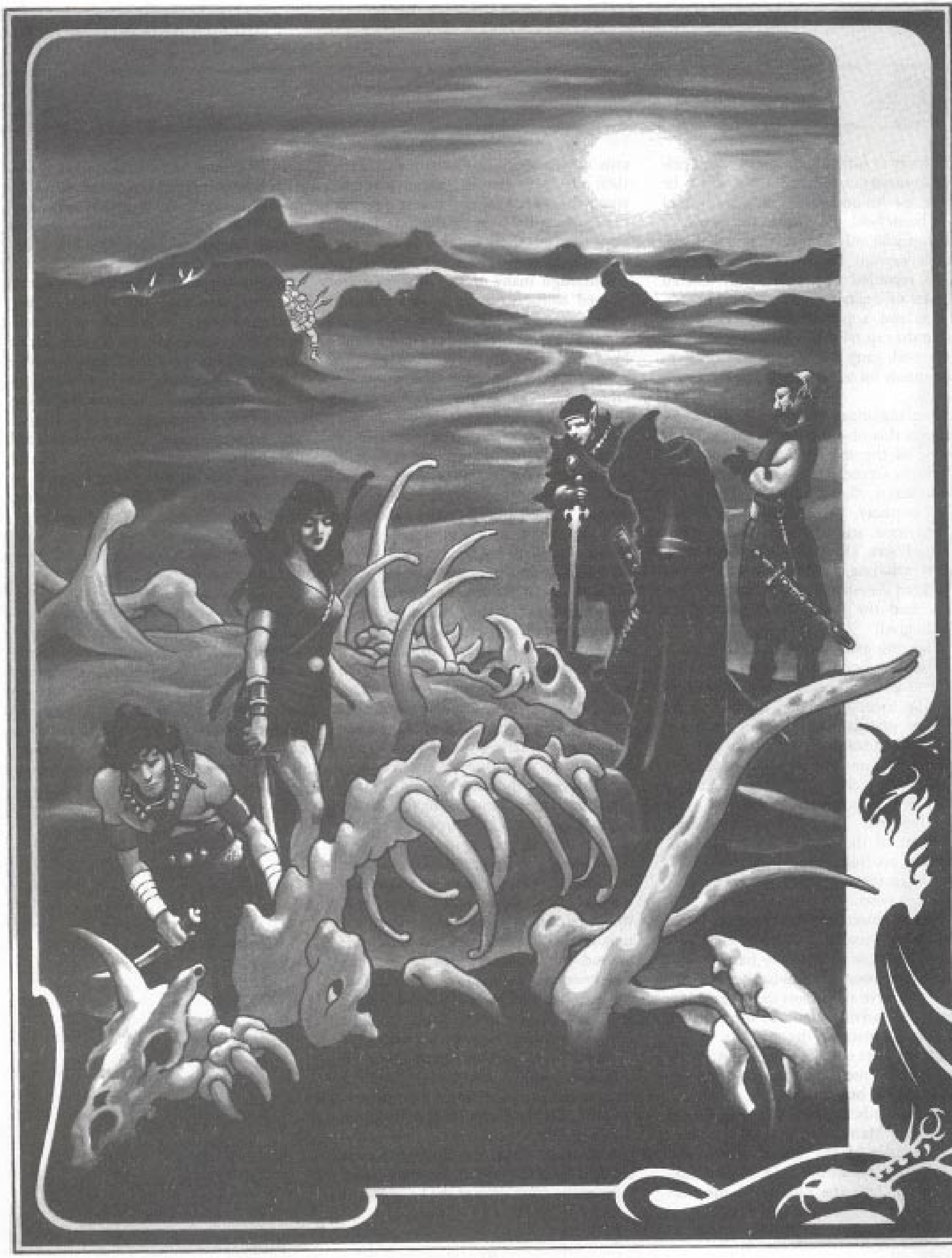
On the other hand, as an island nation, the people of Baltch have had need of a strong navy. Here they lack the powerful resources of the League to assemble a huge fleet and so have had to rely on the quality of their ships and crews instead. The Engineers have applied themselves to the task of ship design with the same vigor that they have given to the design of the Seawall, resulting in stronger and faster ships for their fleet. Since so many of the island's inhabitants make their living from the sea, there is no lack of able seamen to man these ships.

Materials to build the fleet are another matter. Baltch has little in the way of forests needed to build the fleet. Instead, workmen sail to Neron, sometimes upriver into the Reed Delta and sometimes around the southern coast, to cut the wood needed. Normally the ship is built there on the spot, with a temporary camp built for the workmen. Some of these temporary camps have been revisited so often they are almost permanent. If things continue in this course, it will not be long before these camps become permanent villages, outposts of a fledgling Baltch empire.

With their fleet, the Engineers have traveled far and wide. A few have sailed as far as the great cities of the League, but this is a long and dangerous journey. There have even been small sea skirmishes between the ships of the minotaurs and the Baltchians, though never serious enough to cause bad blood between the two.

Regular trade routes include voyages to the Fisheries and the tribes of the Rainward Isles. Occasionally ships venture to the southern coasts of Thenol, an unpopular voyage as the Thenolites are a dour and sinister lot. A few risk the dangers of the Storm Sea to reach the shores of old Aurim. The risks here of the Storm Sea and trading with the temperamental hobgoblins outweighs the reward for most captains, so that most of these voyages are done out of curiosity or the sense of adventure.

When trading, the fleets of Baltch fill their holds with bales of cotton and bags of rice grown in Baltch, rare woods and spices taken from the forests of Neron, copper and iron taken from the mountains of the Rainward Isles, silks from Thenol, and exotic artifacts plundered from the ruins of Old Aurim. These they carry from land to land, some to their own shores and some to other places. Thus the sailors of Baltch form the links between the two peoples of Taladas, those of east and west separated by the flaming hell of Hitehkel.



OLD AURIM AND THE RAINWARD ISLES

Thanks to the seething cauldron of Hitehkel, Taladas is a land divided into two halves. To the west are the towering mountains and vast plains of Hosk. Although broken, these lands still teem with life. To the east are the gray and dust-choked lands of Aurim, as well as the Rainward Isles. These lands, caught under the poisonous clouds blown from Hitehkel, are the home to only a few brave and hardy souls.

Old Aurim, once the seat of a vast empire, is only a narrow shattered strip covered in ash and lava. There was a time when it was larger, the greatest land of all Taladas. But that was before the stone from the sky ripped the better part of the land away and threw up the towering mountains across the plains of Aurim. In a single instant, the Empire of Aurim disappeared forever.

Still, there was worse to come for the people who survived that first blow as the darkness of Hiteh's Night descended upon them. Dark clouds of ash and gas swept out of Hitehkel and scoured the remains of Aurim. Thick black rains fell, coating everything. Epidemics of plague, cholera, flu, dysentery, and others even worse swept through the remaining towns and cities. The people, accustomed to the healing of priests, knew almost nothing of the needs for sanitation. The dead from the epidemics were piled in the town squares while the coffins were made. The disease spread from them, intensifying the epidemic all that much more. Entire towns were emptied. A few fortunate ones had the time and wherewithal to flee; most died before they realized the full danger. In the decades after Hiteh's Night, the remaining people of Aurim dwindled away until there were none.

Now, Aurim is a land of dust, petrified trees, ruins, and hobgoblins. These ubiquitous creatures arrived over the years to claim what the humans had left behind. At first they only looted what they could and moved on. With time they chose to stay and expand their homelands.

But the hobgoblins are not alone, for Erestem has left behind a little something for the people of Taladas. An integral part of her schemes to conquer the world of Ansalon were the hordes of draconians she created to serve as her armies, but they did not spring from nothing. The secret methods by which they were made had to be discovered and perfected. Shattered Aurim was the land she chose to conduct her experiments. Thus she has left behind traces of her handiwork.

Scattered throughout Aurim are the results of her experiments. Only a few are true draconians. Most are twisted failures or unsuitable aberrations. Most died quickly, others were infertile, but some have bred and prospered. These evil creatures, calling themselves the traag, are a breed of draconian unique to Taladas. Ignored by their makers up to now, their success in the hostile land of Aurim has once again piqued Erestem's and Hiteh's interest in this line of draconians. Now they, the hobgoblins, and a few beasts are the only dwellers remaining in Old Aurim.

Still, Old Aurim does have its wonders. The ruins of the old empire are still majestic, sometimes rising in the most unlikely places. Greedy, foolhardy, or brave men have ventured into the domain of the hobgoblins hoping to find treasures from that age. Just enough have survived and returned with great wonders to encourage others to try.

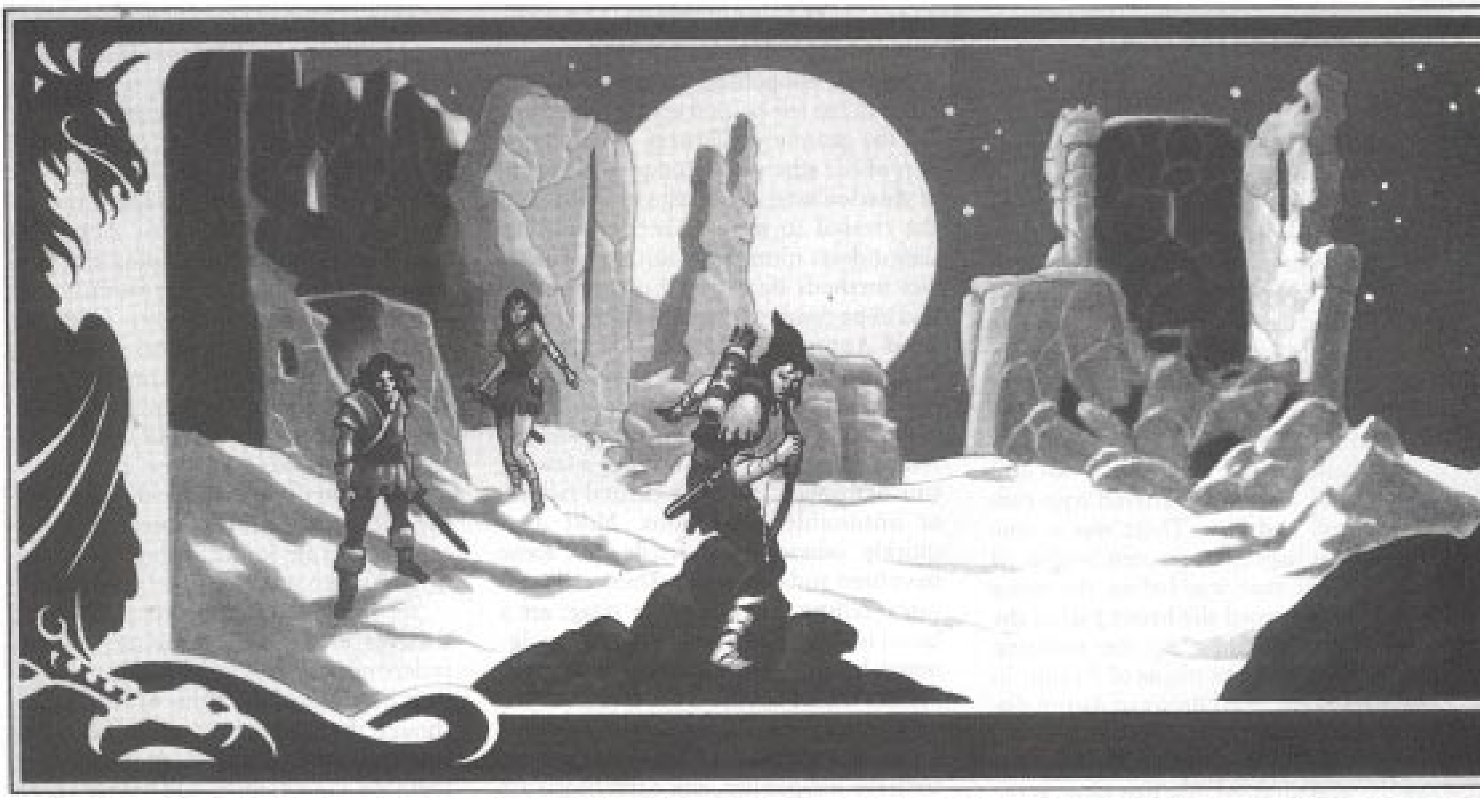
Even more fabulous is the rumored Field of Dragons. Somewhere, perhaps in Old Aurim, is a concealed valley where the oldest of ancient dragons go to die. The floor of this valley is said to be buried completely beneath the bones of the dead beasts. Surely, fortune hunters reason, there must be among those bones great treasures: gem-encrusted scales and heaps of treasures that once filled the gizzards of the old beasts.

Of course, while there are many who claim to have been there or who know someone who was there once, there is no one who can say precisely where it is or just exactly what is to be found there. Like the stories of lost dwarven gold mines and wonderful gnomish machines frozen into glaciers, there is more talk than truth to most of these tales.

The Rainward Isles, at the northern fringes of Taladas, are covered with gloomy pine forests and craggy outcroppings of rock. The islands are grey lands, usually cold and misty. During the summer, wet winds blow off the Storm Sea. In winter, cold ocean breezes meet the warmer winds from inland, shrouding the islands in thick mists. The cold winter skies can suddenly explode in fierce storms that come roaring out of the trackless ocean wastes. The few sailors who venture into these waters fear sailing during these times for the waters surrounding the isles are strewn with jagged rocks, often hidden just below the surface.

Yet the isles are inhabited. Humans, dwarves, and kender—tough and fiercely independent—have managed to build lives here out of the ruins of Aurim. Although the land seems inhospitable, it is rich in animal life. Elk, deer, and bear roam the forests. Otter and beaver play in the many streams that wind through the rocky valleys. Wild apples, pears, and plums grow in natural orchards. Sweet rasp berries, blueberries, and gooseberries line the banks. Strawberries cover the ground of open meadows. For those willing to look and hunt, the Rainward Isles are a treasure trove of delights.

The isles are not without their risks, however. Just as it has an abundance of shelter for wild game, it also provides a hiding place for many creatures more dangerous than even the great grizzly bears. Dragons, seeking solitude from the interference of men and gods, lair in remote corners. Wild centaurs, while not evil, have been known to attack intruders. Giant wolves have laid siege to lonely farms in the dead of winter. People who should have been dead, restless spirits of Old Aurim, roam about at night taking unwary travelers. Human, dwarf, and kender have been forced to work together to survive, creating a unique sense of trust and cooperation among the three races.



THE HOBGOBLINS

Although the traag draconians are increasing in strength and numbers throughout the lands of Aurim, the hobgoblins are still the major power of this blasted land and look to be so for a long time to come. Blood- thirsty, merciless, vicious, feral, and homicidal, all words that have been used to describe them, are the very qualities that ensure their dominance in the region. Their solution to a threat or problem is to kill it. They do not spare innocents, they do not wait to be attacked, and they do not surrender. To be sure, a strong resistance can rout them, but they are seldom defeated for long.

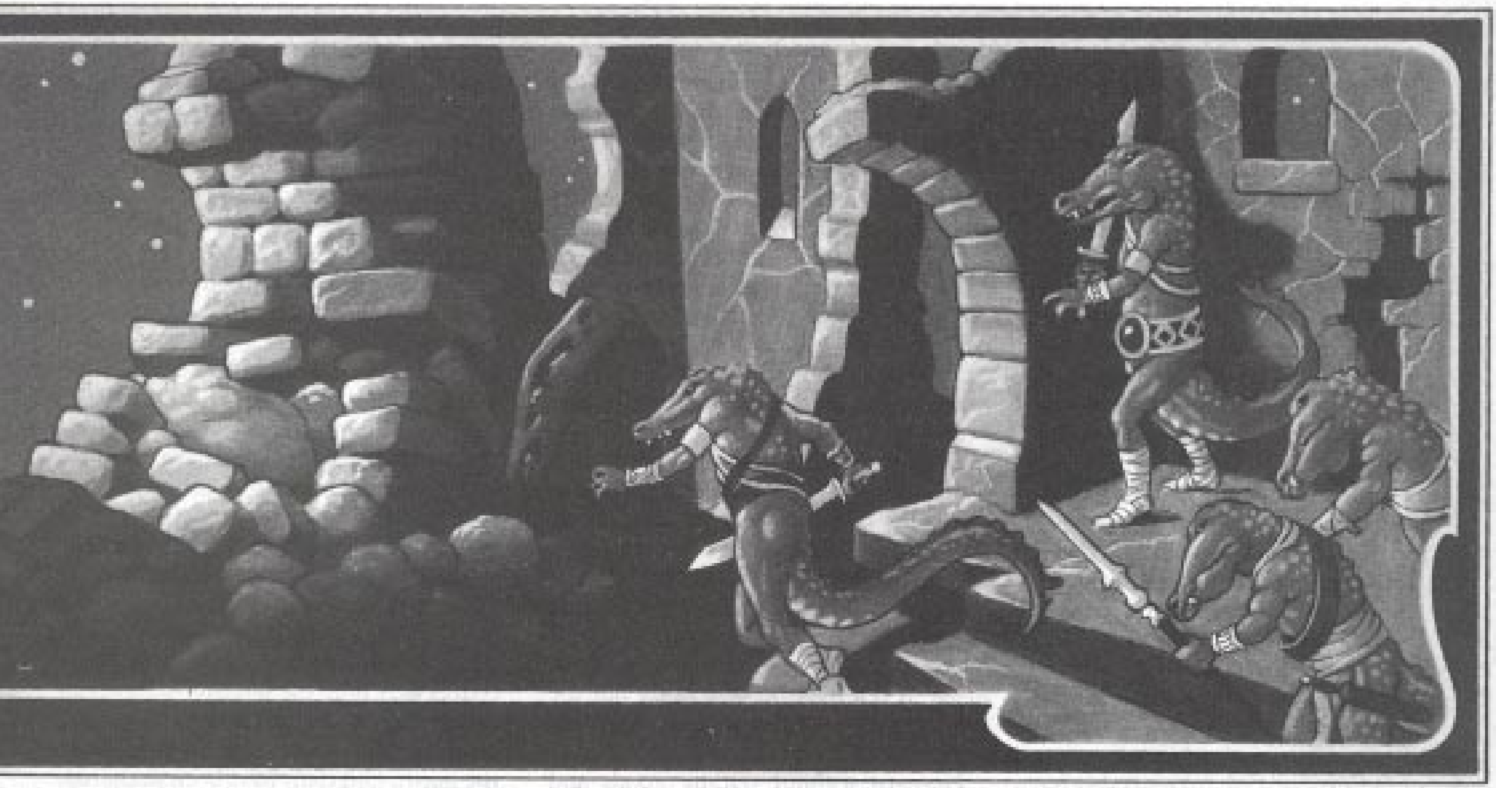
The hobgoblins of Aurim have no dress but war dress. Every member of a tribe goes about armed. Adults, male and female, typically carry spears, clubs, jagged-edged swords, and wicked looking pole-arms. Even children are armed with knives and daggers. Nor are they unwilling to use these weapons, even on each other. Armor replaces clothing, most of it scrounged from ancient ruins, dead bodies, or crudely built. Hides and thick leathers are most common, often mixed with bits of metal armor, a shoulder piece here, a breastplate there. Full suits of metal armor are rare and are usually worn by the most powerful members of the tribe.

Pure power is the only concept the hobgoblins understand. They are organized into tribes, each tribe ruled by chief. The tribal size is determined by how many the chief can terrorize and keep under his control; family means nothing to the creatures, they have no concept of it. Several chiefs are in turn ruled, more or less, by a Great Chief. The Great Chief is usually the chief of the largest tribe. He maintains his position by playing one chief off against another, setting them to war upon each other any time his power is threatened. Still, his power is limited at best. His most frequent task is to assemble the tribes for a major raid, either on tribes of a neighboring Great Chief or, more rarely, to the lands outside Aurim.

Becoming a chief is a fairly simple matter: Kill anyone who opposes you and terrorize all the others without getting killed in the process. The tribes have no laws beyond this. Disputes, even minor ones, are settled by force. Experience has shown the hobgoblins that it is better to kill even for the slightest argument. An enemy left to live will harbor a grudge and might strike at any time. Dead heads hold no thoughts, dead hands hold no swords, so the hobgoblin saying goes.

This system leads to a clear pecking order like a pack of animals. The chief bosses everyone under him, his underling defers to the chief and bosses those under him, etc., down to the lowest level. In every tribe there is one poor, miserable hobgoblin terrorized by all others. No one feels any sympathy for him, only satisfaction that they are of higher status. The children, ignored by their elders, also follow this system among themselves. Those hobgoblins who bother to think about all this believe the whole system is good since it promotes strength and weeds out the weaklings. After all, the strongest tribe will be the greatest.

While ferocity and muscle are the most



obvious ways to power, they are not the only ways. The only measure of power is whether the chief is able to. defeat his challengers. To this end, reputation, fear, and cunning are other useful tools to gain power. In general, the best chiefs combine warlike savagery with devious cunning. Enemies who kill each other are better enemies than enemies you kill yourself is another popular saying.

With the high degree of violence among them, the hobgoblins have a much different attitude about death. Those who die are not revered; they are failures. Death is not so much feared (although no normal hobgoblin wishes to die) as held in contempt. To be afraid of death is to be afraid of the taker of weaklings, something no hobgoblin cares to admit. Thus hobgoblins are reckless, taking chances greater than warranted and exposing themselves needlessly to danger.

The attitudes about power and death create a dualism in the way the hobgoblins fight. On one hand, stealth and ambushes increase the chance of victory over their enemies, their only measure of success. Thus it is good to ambush the enemy and slay him. On the other hand, stealth and secrecy are cowardice. The bushwhacker is afraid his enemy will kill him; he is afraid of dying.

To resolve these conflicting attitudes, the hobgoblins use ambush in situations where the odds already favor them, not the other way around. Since they are likely to win, the ambush is not a reflection on them being afraid of death but on guaranteeing victory. In situations where the battle seems more evenly matched, the hobgoblins are more likely to approach openly and loudly, alerting their enemies of their arrival. In this way they are not hiding from the risk of death and their victory over their enemies will be all that much greater.

Of course all this can lead to some preposterous battle tactics. On the battlefield, the hobgoblins are likely to advance slowly while making a lot of noise. Tactics that would be useful, such as feints, reserves, or flank marches, are often ignored in favor of the straight-on attack. Hobgoblin armies suffer more casualties without breaking than those of other people because the hobgoblins are accustomed to it by their tactics.

These tendencies are not absolute by any means. Many times hobgoblins surprise their enemies by resorting to stratagems normally unexpected of them. Most often this happens when the hobgoblins are under the command of a strong chieftain, one who combines ruthlessness with cunning and can get his tribe to follow his commands.

Although Aurim is a desolate land with few resources, the hobgoblins have been able to eke out an existence. They are carnivores and will eat any kind of meat they can find. Enlightened tribes raise dogs to be butchered for meat, but most rely on hunting. Game is sparse and fiercely competed for, so it is not unusual for the hobgoblins to resort to cannibalism or even eating the tough, stringy humans they find. They claim that gnome meat is tough and hard but that it keeps for a long time and has a good flavor, which makes the gnomes one of their most popular prey.

On the plain the tribes live nomadic lives, trudging from place to place. A tribe remains in an area for as long as possible: until the hunting goes bad, the water dries up, or until they are driven off by their neighbors. They carry all their possessions on drags pulled behind them.

Upon arriving at a new camp, they set up tents of crudely tanned leather, helter-skelter about the area. The chiefs tent is at the center of the village nearest the great fire. Everyone else casts their tents in the best spots around him. This is an occasion for much fighting as the more powerful bully the weaker out of the choice locations. Hobgoblin camps are bigger than those of most nomads since the stronger drive the weaker farther and farther to the fringes of the camp. Once settled each tent minds its own business. There is no attempt to organize sanitation or fresh water and community defense is only accomplished by the chiefs bullying. In short, they live pretty squalid and miserable lives.

As noted before, hobgoblins have no sense of family. They are a remarkably fecund race (it is the only way they have survived and thrived, given their murderous practices), but the children are virtually ignored once weaned. No attempt is made to identify parents or build a familial bond. A female hobgoblin will kill a child that nursed at its breast as willingly as it would kill any other. Children, in turn, will kill elders and this is often a rite of passage for the child.

Yet the tribe is not without some community spirit. They are not so dumb as to refuse to band together if attacked or if cooperation is needed to accomplish some goal, provided the chief can force it upon them.

They have enemies, particularly the traag draconians that also lurk in Aurim. No love is lost between these two groups. While the hobgoblins dominate the plains of Aurim, the traag dwell in the ancient ruins. Because of this, the hobgoblins seldom venture into the old cities, although they know there are great treasures, metal armor and weapons in particular, to be found there. Only the bravest or more power-crazed risk capture by the traag, who torture their captives for days or weeks before killing them. Likewise, any draconian who ventures onto the plain can expect to become dinner for a gleeful hobgoblin tribe.

Those hobgoblins on the coast have had some contact with human traders and often manage to refrain from eating them. This is usually accomplished by the trader showing up with a large enough group of guards to discourage any attacks, but a few chiefs are wise enough to realize trade (as opposed to robbery) will make them more powerful than their neighbors.

By hobgoblin standards the traders seem willing to pay high prices, judged in quantities of metal weapons and armor, for useless artifacts taken from the ruins. The merchants pride themselves on duping the gullible beasts, trading them cheaply made bronze swords and spearheads for powerful ancient magical items. It is a risky bit of trading but the profits from a single trip can make the whole effort worthwhile.

Humans without trading goods and gnomes in general can only expect the worst from the hobgoblins. Gnomes, no matter what their business, are enemies to be slain. While sometimes humans are able to talk their way out of dangerous situations (especially if they can do something useful for the chief) they are much more likely to end up in the dinner pot. Elves, to the minds of the hobgoblins, are nothing more than funny-looking humans; dwarves are tall, fat gnomes, while kender are skinny ones.

THE PEOPLE OF THE ISLES

Cast off into the cold, rain-swept northeastern corner beyond the Storm Sea, the Rainward Isles are almost like a different world from the rest of Taladas. Here one would expect to find hardship and suffering as the sole offerings of life.

The land is wet and gray. For weeks at a time the shores are fog-bound. There are days when the air reeks of sulphurous poison and gray ash drifts from the sky, all blown over from Hitehkel. Ships are ground to splinters on the jagged rocks that circle the island. Hideous creatures crawl out of the Storm Sea to ravage the coast. Yet, against all odds, those living in the Isles are happy and consider their lives to be good.

There was a time when it was all suffering and hardship. The people cast up here fought the elements, fought the fantastic beasts, and fought each other. Men and dwarves battled each other, while the kender taunted and tormented both of them. It was as if a madness, a poison in the air carried over from Hitehkel, were infecting them all. The slaughter might have continued if it hadn't been for Aethelred the Squat, a wise dwarven chieftain. Under his guidance the warring groups were brought together as the People of the Isles.

The People, or Islanders as they are also known, are a mixed lot. There are humans able to trace their ancestry to the nobles of old Aurim and others whose ancestors were once the servants of those nobles. There are dwarves from the southern mountains and dwarves from the north. Old clans have been shattered. There are kender, and it does not matter where they came from since they are all equally infuriating. Once separate, these diverse groups have now accepted new identities as the People.

Once they laid down their swords, the People discovered that the Rainward Isles were much more fertile and lush than they had ever imagined. True, there were dangers, but the riches of the land and sea more than made up for these. It did not take long before they were living comfortable lives. This is the way things have been for them ever since.

The People live in small villages. and farms close to the coast, mostly on the eastern side of the isles away from the winds of Hitehkel. Their homes vary from race to race. The humans build one- and two-storey houses of oak and pine with shuttered windows and sod roofs. Granaries and barns are built up off the ground to keep the vermin out. Sometimes the ground floor of the house is given over to the family cow or swine.

The kender follow this pattern of building, although their houses tend to

be smaller and more haphazard. Their curiosity and whimsy cannot help but express itself in their buildings. They are forever building on, remodeling, and rearranging to accommodate the latest treasures they have found.

The homes of the dwarves are most distinctive. Forced by the unstable nature of the rock under the soil (which is rent with volcanic fissures and moving faults), they have adapted their deep underground dwellings to a more surface-like life. The entrances to their communal homes are marked by a wooden gate house built into the slope of a hill. Sometimes the entrance opens onto an entire street where all people come to shop and trade; other times the dwarven shopkeepers build their shops among the villagers outside. Beyond the entrance hall are windowless passages and tunnels dug into the earth. These are driven as deep as they dare, but still not deep as the dwarves would like. Many dwarves fondly recall the old deep tunnels they used to live in, the ones that coiled round the roots of great mountains and from time to time expeditions will set out across the water to see if these old homes can be found and reopened once again. To date none have returned.

The People make their livings in a variety of ways. Although the land is rugged and heavily forested, there are those who have managed to clear areas for small farms, raising vegetables and grain. There is ample pasture for herds of dairy cattle and goats. Fishermen cast their nets around the dangerous rocks of the coast to bring in rich catches of smelt, herring, cod, and other fish. The forests are filled with pines that grow straight and tall, making good lumber. Trappers bring back pelts of fox, squirrel, beaver, and otter, while the larders of huntsmen are hung with smoked deer haunches, pots of bear grease, and salted fatback of wild boars.

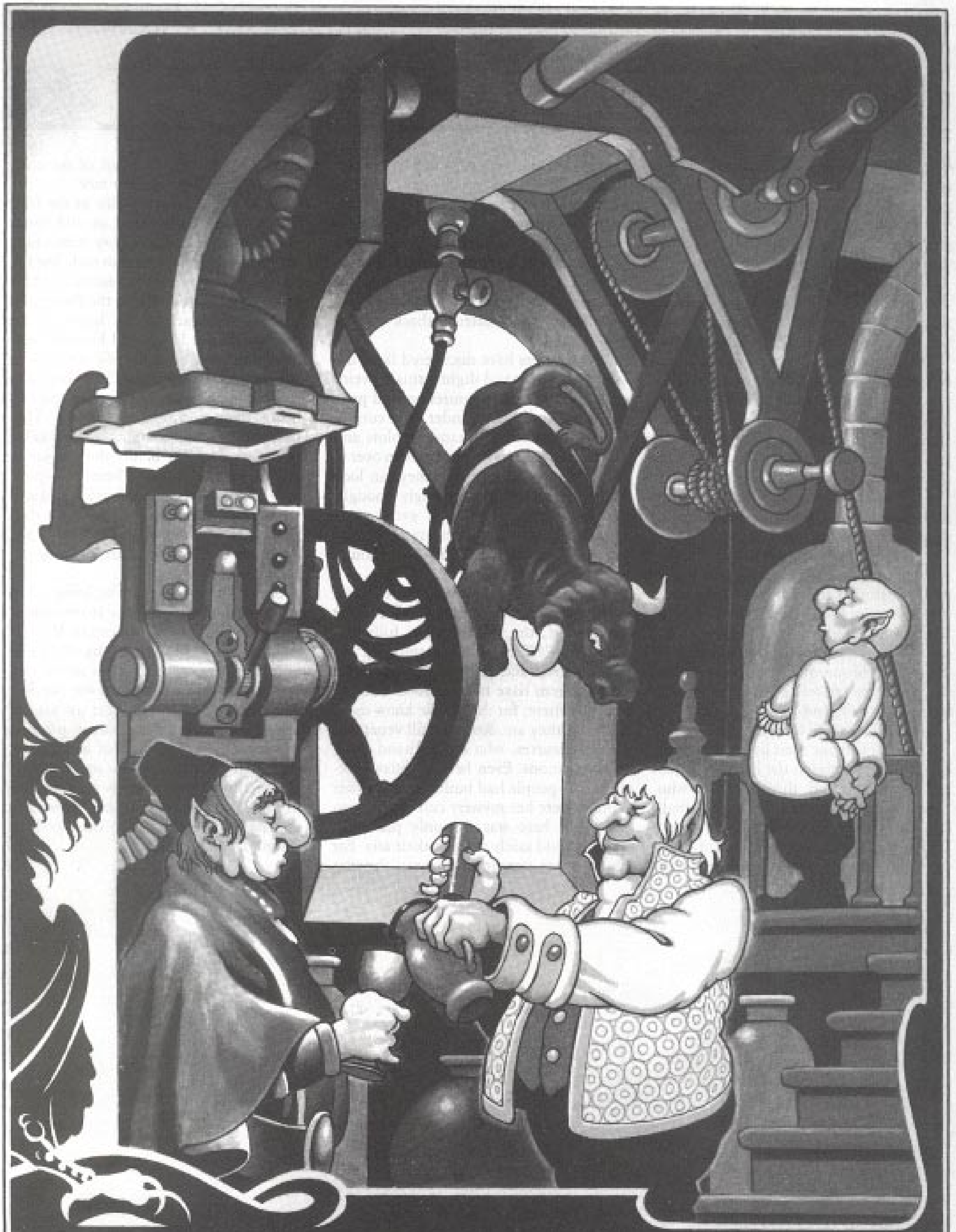
The dwarves have discovered large deposits of copper and slightly smaller veins of fine grade iron, treasures beyond price to their minds. The kender, ever curious and adventurous, constantly explore and try to convince sailors to take them over to the lands of old Aurim so they can look through the ruins. Amazingly enough, sometimes they do and even more amazing, sometimes these same kender return bearing wonders and junk, though it's all wonderful to them.

Even the gods have been well thought of in the Isles. Despite the travails of the early years, the People never fully lost their faith. They have remembered the old practices and the old beliefs. Hiteh and Erestem have never gained a strong foothold here, for the People know them for what they are. Reorx is still venerated by the dwarves, who see his hand in all their creations. Even before Mislaxa's return, the people had built temples to her honor. Here her mystery cult never flowered, for here was the only place her priests could safely practice their arts. For decades her temples have been thriving openly,. working to help all of the community, regardless of their race.

Of course, all is not idyllic in the Isles. The weather and the land are still harsh. Winters are cold with mighty storms lashing the coast for days without end. The forests also harbor horrible monsters that have no qualms about attacking the People.

Denied a place in the hearts of the community are Hiteh and Erestem, who have launched on a horrific revenge on the people. The two gods have begun to revive the evils of the islanders' past by using their necromantic powers. They have summoned up wights of those killed in the wars fought before the coming of Aethelred the Squat. These evil spirits only remember their old hatreds and seek to continue the war. They stalk the dark trails that wind through the forests and the little-used mine shafts waiting for their victims.

Slowly the two gods are building a dark army with which they hope to overwhelm the weak and merciful priests of Mislaxa. Already outlying farms have fallen. Sometimes human survivors arrive in a village with tales of ghoulish war bands of dwarves seeking revenge for an ancient wrong; at other times dwarven prospectors come back with tales of undead human warriors chanting war songs as they march through the forests on moonless nights. The priests of Mislaxa are worried and have been praying to their goddess for guidance or a sign.



HITEHKEL

"In the weeks after leaving the great mountains of the north, the guides led the way across a land of extreme dryness. In these weeks the mission of Dominus saw no living thing save snakes who could puff their bodies to great size and by so doing could force open the burrowed holes of small creatures. It was upon crossing this land that the mission reached the Mountains of Towers, known to the inhabitants as Itomyadnali, as itom is their word for pinnacle and nali is their word for mountam. Here the guides would go no farther, saying they had come to the doorway to the Abyss, and so they deserted the mission to go forward on its own.

Determined not to waver in the task set by the High Priest, Dominus and those friars accompanying him set forward in to this land. It was not long before the mission made con tact with the people of this land, a short race known as the Gnomoi. Under their escort, those members of the mission were shown about the land.

It is a land of many terrible wonders. The mountains are great square pillars and have been cunningly wrought out by the Gnomoi people. These vast towers stand on the shores of a great sea of fire and smoke, plied by metal ships and filled with the most hideous creatures of flame. So terrifying was this that Friar Jurgen was struck dumb upon sighting it. This place is surely the doorway to the Abyss and Dominus named it Hitehkel."

—A description of the lands visited by Dominus, priest of Narun, in the 180th year after the Great Destruction, by Friar Svike of Styrllia

It has been called Hell, doorway to the Abyss, the Sea of Fire, or the Wound of the Earth, but to most of Taladas it is Hitehkel, the Kingdom of Hiteh the Merchant, evil god of corruption and lies. To say that it is a land almost stretches the point, for it better resembles a seething cauldron, a giant basin filled with boiling lava and ringed by a narrow strip of towering mountains.

Yet, even in this terrifying and inhospitable terrain there is life. Above the fiery plain are the great cities of the gnomoi, the industrious mechanical-minded children of Reorx. From their tower homes they mine and smelt the riches of Hitehkel, producing ingots of steel for export throughout the world. Where others see only hellish destruction, the gnomoi find the blessings of their god.

There are more sinister inhabitants living within the churning pit of fire itself. No man, not even an inventive gnome or a powerful wizard, can survive in this sea of lava for long, but denizens of the realms of fire prefer it above all other places on Krynn. Here is the intense heat, soothing lava, and sulphurous fumes so much like their homes on the plane of Fire. Bound in allegiance to Hiteh, who first brought them to this land, the fire beings of Hitehkel look to expand their realm into the mountain homes of the gnomoi and beyond.

Shaped like a gigantic volcanic cone, Hitehkel divides into three main regions. The outermost is the towering mountains that form the wall separating Hitehkel. Although these mountains look like the caldera caused by the great stone that struck Taladas, the caldera actually collapsed into the seething turmoil that spewed out from the center of the earth. The walls that now ring the molten sea resulted from the tilting of the old ranges and the volcanic activity that followed. These mountains formed into strange hexagonal columns and towering narrow peaks known as the Spires. Mingled among these are massive volcanoes and geyser basins. This is the home of the gnomoi.

Within the ring of the Spires is the second region of Hitehkel, the Cooling Land. This is a broad belt that encircles the heart of Hitehkel. Here the ground is slowly hardening, forming a surface that can be walked upon—perhaps. Travel across the Cooling Land is treacherous, especially without an experienced guide. There are many places where the skin is dangerously thin, barely covering the boiling earth beneath. Sometimes volcanic fountains burst through the crust, raining droplets and blobs of molten stone. From a distance the Cooling Land looks like a smooth plain, but closer up it is rugged and broken. At night it is strangely lit by fiery cracks where molten lava has cracked through the surface. Like a sheet of ice covering a great lake, the Cooling Lands creak and groan, pop and grate, as the ground contracts and expands, slowly hardening, collapsing, and rebuilding.

At the very heart of Hitehkel is the third region, the Great Lava Sea. Only great wizards with spells of protection, denizens of the flame, and the fire-fleets of the gnomes can venture onto its "waters." It is a churning cauldron of molten rock, fluid like water though thicker like molasses. It is in a state of constant turmoil. Floating on the surface like icebergs are chunks beginning to cool and harden. Geysers hundreds of feet in height can erupt at any point as can swelling, surging mounds of fresh lava. Whirlpools can form and grow to immense size, sucking all caught within them to the very center of Krynn (although nothing yet has survived that long).

In such a place, only the most terrifying creatures could survive, let alone choose to live here. Terrifying indeed are the fire minions of Hiteh. -These creatures (from the elemental plane of Fire) swim within the molten waters of the' Great Lava Sea. These beings, intelligent and cunning, have entered into Krynn through a gate deep within this volcanic crater, a point' where the walls dividing the plane of Fire from this plane are weak. Still, they could not have entered without the aid of Hiteh and so are here by his will. Mindful of their benefactor and contemptuous of all "fleshlings," they serve Hitch loyally, although they are headstrong and difficult to command even then.

If the fire minions were content to stay within their fiery realm, it is doubtful that men would 'dispute their claims to rule over it. However, such is not the case for the gnomoi. Aside from coveting the riches of the earth swept to the surface in this sea, the gnomoi also believe the recent (since the Cataclysm) legends of

Grathanich. Lost since the time of its loosing, tales have often told of its discovery in one place or another. Most of these have proven patently false, but sometimes there is a suggestion of truth to the matter. The most recent of these tales makes the claim that the Grathanich is the keystone of the Tower of Flame at the very heart of the Burning Sea. Although told in various guises, the basics of the tale are always the same.

During the Gnomoi War, when the fire-fleets pressed to the very heart of Hiteh's realm and stormed the Tower of Flame, one soldier, sometimes gnomish and other times human, the sole survivor of a squad, managed to actually reach a large chamber where a glowing, gray stone sat on a pedestal. Forced to retreat, the soldier barely had time to tell X (usually some kin or friend of a friend of the person telling the tale) what he saw before dying of his horrible wounds. Humans dismiss this tale like so many others that tell of the lost treasures of Aurim or abandoned dwarven iron mines.

For the gnomoi, however, it is a much more important matter. The Grathanich is perhaps the most revered artifact of their race, and its recovery would mean more than anything to them. Thus they take these tales seriously. Throughout their history expeditions have set out on one quest after another, searching out the truth about the Grathanich. None, though, has proven more difficult or deadly than this one. As of yet, no expedition has reached the center of the Burning Sea or penetrated the Tower of Flame to learn the truth.

Ecologically, Hitehkel is a barren wasteland. Clearly nothing natural and even very little unnatural survives on the Burning Sea or even the Cooling Land. What little plant and animal life there is concentrates in the barely more hospitable mountains of the Spires. Even here, most of the life forms found are hideous and strange, monsters twisted by the poisonous fumes and acidic rains that blanket the lands. Trees and lush green plants are nonexistent; lichens, mosses, and bloated fungi comprise the bulk of what little flora there is. Almost all the larger plants that exist are carnivorous, a necessary adaptation to supplement the meager nutrients found in the thin soil.

Beasts are stranger still, the bulk of them predators since few can survive on the plants of the mountains. So few are the herbivores that predators are forced to prey upon each other, While a normal predator needs strong teeth and claws just to bring down a deer, those of the Spires need much more. Their victims are not defenseless creatures prone to flight, but monsters as fierce as themselves.

It is in this land that the dragons are dominant of all creatures. None are more powerful or more savage than they. Many of the othlorx have made their homes in the Spires and command vast territories. Nor are their hunting grounds limited to Hitehkel. They frequently fly out from their lairs, where few disturb them, into the lands of Neron and Hosk. Here they feed on the riches of the land. Once satiated, they return to their lairs to sleep and rest until they feel the need to feed again.

The Spire Mountain Gnomes

Unarguably the greatest technological civilization in all of Taladas, perhaps all of Krynn, is the gnomish kingdom hidden away in the Spire Mountains of Hitehkel. These gnomes, living in cities carved from the bizarre crystalline towers that rise in these mountains, are builders on a grand scale. They are no simple workers of stone or carvers of wood; their medium is steel and strange ceramics poured from the molten rock of Hitehkel itself. Where others see only a curse, the gnomoi of Hitehkel have found a blessing. No longer do they slave in unsafe caves searching for meager veins of iron. Now all they need do is refine and smelt the lava that flows all about them.

The Gnomes of the Spires are divided into two groups, the gnomoi and the minoi. (The term gnome is used when referring to the people as a whole.) The gnomoi are the leaders, thinkers, and master craftsmen of the kingdom; the minoi are workers, artists, soldiers, and everyday folk. The minoi are greater in number than the gnomoi but the gnomoi, because of their natures, are the leaders and commanders of the people.

In appearance, there is nothing to distinguish the two races, even though their origins are entirely different even unto their earliest ancestors. The gnomoi are the "true" gnomes of Krynn, supposedly fashioned by the hand of Reorx himself, as his ultimate creations. The minoi are a cursed race, created in Reorx's rage. The tale of their creation is known to every gnome child of the mountains.

According to the story, Reorx, pleased with the cleverness of his creations (the gnomoi) thought to himself, "It is not just that these children of mine should profit by their cleverness over all my other children in this world. Unto each of my children I shall bestow some art." So he began teaching the founders of nations and the fathers of races his secret skills so that they could take their place beside the gnomoi.

First he took the fathers of the dwarves and taught them the arts of steel and magic, so that they became cunning artificers of the hard metal. The dwarves grew skillful in their arts and it pleased him. But as their skill grew so did their pride until they boasted that they above all others were favored by Reorx. Vexed by their arrogance, Reorx hid the riches of the earth deep beneath the ground and the dwarves were forced to dig ever deeper to find them until they no longer welcomed the light of the surface.

Next he took the fathers of the elves and taught them to see the cunning lines hidden in all things so that they might fashion beauty where others could see nothing. The elves became skilled at this, fashioning wonders from the hidden shapes in stones and Reorx was pleased. But the elves became haughty, claiming they were the finest of Reorx's children and Reorx grew displeased. At last he cursed them with the fear of stone, so that no longer would they create anything of permanence and would only fashion from wood, destined to someday decay and disappear from sight.

Finally, Reorx turned to man, the larg-

est of his children. So quickly do the humans multiply that already the fathers of that race had created and populated nations. Unto the founders of the nations, Reorx gave the arts of building so that they might make mighty halls and palaces for themselves and all of his children. The humans excelled at this art and began to make such monuments as had never been seen.

But one nation among them all was perverse and slow-witted. Though they tried mightily, they could not build great structures to last. All that they built was crooked and bent, yet they marvelled at their own skill, naming themselves greater than Reorx. Nor were they satisfied with only perverting. the arts of building but also sought to steal the arts of the forge and the machine from the other races. Finally Reorx could take no more of their pride and their ineptitude. He took from all humans the secret knowledge of his arts, leaving them only the memories of what they once knew. As for those of that prideful nation, he cursed them to become as small as their small-mindedness. Thus were born the minoi. It was only through his mercy that he let them take the mold of his favored children, the gnomoi, to serve as a reminder to them of the perils of pride.

Today, gnomoi and minoi are indistinguishable. Both are a short, somewhat squat race (though nothing like the barrel-built dwarves) about three to three-and-a-half feet tall. While not tubby or obese, they tend to have a plump layer of fat over their bodies. Their noses are broad and particularly long and large and their cheeks are round, while their eyes are recessed and sad-looking. Their faces glow with a ruddy sheen. The men wrinkle quickly as they grow older, giving an impression of great age and wisdom to even young, rash males.

Males grow beards and mustaches, but the length is determined by the gnome's age and occupation. Youths, apprentices, and minor clerks are beardless, at most growing a lush set of muttonchops sideburns. Administrators and leaders who are not involved in the day-to-day work of the shops grow their beards long and full, often reaching to their knees. Craftsmen keep theirs short and neatly trimmed (long beards too easily become tangled in gears or are scorched away by the heat of the lava smelters). Warriors grow theirs long but then braid them, sometimes even going so far as to tie these braids together behind the neck. Hair is normally worn neatly close-cropped for all males, although nobles may affect elaborate perfumed hairdos and patriarchs normally let their wispy white hair grow long as a sign of their respected station.

Gnomish women differ little in appearance from their men. They are, if anything, slightly larger- boned and plumper. Unlike their dwarven cousins, the women are universally beardless. Ash blonde to straw are the most common hair colors. Unlike the men, the women do not wrinkle quickly. However, they are more susceptible to gray hair, often becoming white-headed before they are 150 years old, barely out of middle age.

Gnomish dress tends to favor practicality, although they certainly have no moral injunctions against finery. The preferred colors for men are reds, blues, and browns, while women's dress leans toward white and red.

Workingman's dress, the most common seen, typically consists of a tight-cuffed, long-sleeved pullover shirt made of heavy, coarse cloth and a pair of thick breeches. Hard, heavy boots, reinforced with steel, are worn and the gnomes can often be heard making a wonderful racket clomping about the halls in these. Depending on the workman's duties, other special clothing may also be worn. This includes thick leather aprons, gloves, asbestos mitts, and masks to protect from flying sparks. Those working on the smelting floors and at the forges often wear leather skullcaps to protect their hair. Dirty rags to wipe clean sweat and grease are usually carried.

Nobles and administrators dress entirely differently, another sign of their position. The standard court dress is a floor-length robe that hangs straight down from the shoulders. The shoulders are built up with padding and stiffeners so that the robe is unnaturally broad and wide at the top. It is worn unbelted and is sometimes pleated on the sides. The cloth is bright but of a solid color, although a heraldic symbol may dominate the chest and back. A tasselled stole, reaching almost to the floor, is worn over the shoulders for official functions. This is embroidered and printed with the symbols of the wearer's office and rank. Tight-fitting, brimless caps reminiscent of the worker's skullcap are sometimes worn, particularly out-of-doors or when in the shops.

Gnomish housewives wear white blouses and skirts of starchy linen. The



top half buttons down the front and is quite loose-fitting (to accommodate the layers of undergarments worn). The skirt is floor length. Both are hemmed with strips of colorful embroidery made by the family. Typical designs are geometrics, gears, or fantastic animals. The quantity and skill of the embroidery is a point of pride for the housewife and nearly all fancy clothing will show at least some sample of her skill.

GNOMOI AND MINOI

Although there is no difference in appearance or dress between the gnomoi and the minoi, all gnomes are acutely aware of the difference between the two classes. Simply put, the minoi, while they lack nothing in desire and ingenuity, lack the logical minds of the gnomoi. For builders of intricate machinery, architects, civil engineers, administrators, judges, strategists, and tacticians, this is a fatal flaw. For poets, sculptors, painters, actors, everyday laborers, clerks, scribes, and soldiers, this lack of logic is insignificant or even an asset.

The difference between the two types of gnomes is best seen in the different approach each would take to building the same machine. The gnomoi try to be direct and straight-forward, applying ingenious devices to create a workable solution. A minoi builder would create the most roundabout device possible, of limited practicality, and one that would most likely not work or at least not the way its maker intended.

Gnomoi machines tend to do what they were made to do and nothing more. Minoi devices tend to bounce about uncontrollably, shoot blasts of scalding steam, explode, stop unexpectedly, emit piercing squeals, start when the stop button is pushed, break things, electrocute, and generally self-destruct. They are not the kind of things that make a civilization advance.

Given this, it is not surprising that the gnomoi have taken a firm grip on the minoi and paternally guided them over the eons. Custom, based on practical needs, has established that the gnomoi are in charge. They make the laws and administer justice, shuddering at the thought of what minoi justice might be like. They set taxes and allocate funds from the treasury. (Many centuries ago there was a council that foolishly allowed greater voice to the minoi in the funding of projects. The automatic bed-making device that lashed sleepers to their bunks was the result.)

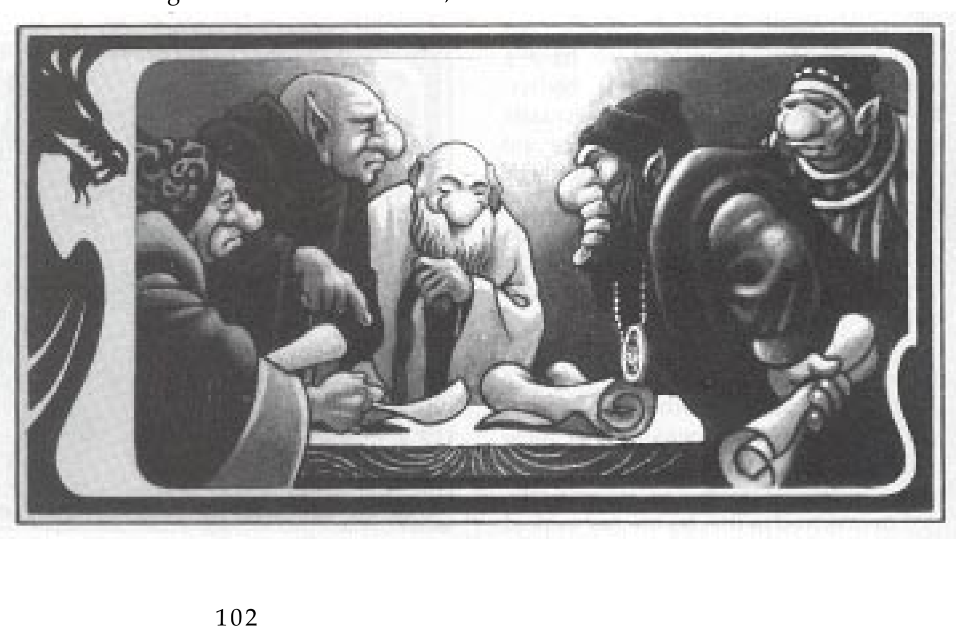
The gnomoi design and supervise all public works, although the minoi are forever trying to get their pet projects approved (air canals, for one). The gnomoi design most new machinery. Minoi are allowed to undertake original designs, since the gnomoi realize that the constructive urge must be satisfied in all gnomes, but only under close supervision. Testing new minoi devices is always done with great care. Where the minoi inventor would just as soon turn the engine on right there in his lab, the gnomoi insist all devices be tested in specially prepared chambers—armor-plated and fitted with special observation ports. The minoi think the gnomoi are timid milquetoasts who don't appreciate the joy of inventing.

Although the gnomoi dominate the minoi, they are not without conscience. The wise leaders of old were perfectly aware that the society could easily devolve into a master/slave or superior/inferior relationship, something that would be bad for all the gnomes. At the same time, these leaders were unwilling to trust their fates to a full partnership with the minoi, who are less capable in the arts valued by the gnomes. In their writings they argued that the minoi had useful insights to offer and should not be neglected.

To this end, every gnome receives training in the engineering arts to the best of his ability. There have been rare cases of true genius among the minoi, gnomes whose combination of illogic and desire has succeeded in producing visionary works. However most of the minoi fall far short of this, ending their education earlier than the gnomoi. Even among the gnomoi only a few are able to complete their studies all the way through.

In keeping with this attitude, the king of the gnomes has always espoused a policy of "one people." There are no laws that affect one group over the other unequally. Indeed, there are grievous penalties for the crimes judged to be motivated by prejudice. If a gnome murders for money, it is a crime punishable by imprisonment; the gnome who kills another out of prejudicial fear or pride is punished with death. Still, there are customary prejudices between the two groups. Marriage between gnomoi and minoi is infrequent at best. Relationships between the two groups tends to be reserved—often friendly but never intimate.

Curiously, although the gnomoi privately agonize over the correctness of



their relationship to the minoi, the minoi seem to harbor no apprehensions or complaints about their treatment at the hands of the gnomoi. They consider the tasks of ruling and administration undesirable. Soldiering is respectable, but only for warriors in the front line. Tacticians and strategists who command armies are less respected than those at the forefront. Eccentric inventors who build a device by trial and error are greater than trained engineers who work out designs for others to build. In short, the minoi consider praiseworthy those qualities the gnomoi think are detrimental. More than anything else it is this set of contrasting viewpoints that has ensured harmony between the two races.

THE CITADELS

Harmony is essential to the gnomes, for they are crowded close together. Before the Cataclysm, the gnomes lived in scattered communities throughout the central mountains of Taladas. Since the great strike of the Cataclysm, the land outside has become inhospitable. Many warrens died in the dark years of Hiteh's night, a terrible blow to a race to which the warrens meant so much.

The gnomes realized they were doomed if they did not find a safer homeland. They could not live on the surface as they once had and so, under the direction of the gnomoi, they set about creating the citadels, carved from the sturdiest of the massive stone columns.

Among the looming peaks of the Spires, the gnomes undertook the massive project of carving the citadels; homes, warrens, cities, factories, and fortresses all in one. Although they are less than 300 years into their project, the gnomes have already completed several of the citadels. The gnomes feel they have made excellent progress, especially considering the untimely interruption of a major war with the fire minions of Hitehkel. Still the war provided the builders with a real test of their handiwork during the siege of the Citadel of Aldinanachru. Based on this experience, the builders have incorporated many improvements and modifications to their original plans. Still, no gnome looks forward to the day when the quality of their work is tested in war.

All the citadels follow a common design, though this must obviously be altered to account for many varying factors. Height and width of the tower, quality of the stone, surrounding terrain, and hidden faults and fractures within the rock all affect the overall construction. As much as possible, however, the builders keep to the planned design.

The plans are conceived by gnomoi engineers (to ensure practicality) and then drawn up by minoi draftsmen. These minoi naturally add their own "improvements" during the drafting stage. Aware of this, the gnomoi double-check all plans once they are drawn up, removing those minoi additions too dangerous or impractical to implement. The rest they leave, in part a concession to the minoi but also because the minoi have a better-developed artistic sense. The draftsmen tend to remember things like windows, statuary, and park-like areas that the gnomoi forget.

With plans in hand, construction begins. This, like all building and invention work of the gnomes, follows a pattern similar to the plan-making. The gnomoi supervise, the minoi cheerfully do the work, adding in whatever extra details they can when the gnomoi aren't around. The result may be an unexpected room devoted to the mechanisms of an automatic door opener or a floor fitted with heating pipes. Sometimes these improvements cause expensive delays, but many others, while somewhat annoying to the gnomoi, are left as they are, allowing each citadel to be more and more a home to the minoi.

The standard building practice is to divide the tower into a series of floors. While the exact number varies from tower to tower (as determined by height) the pattern of use remains the same. At the bottommost level are storerooms and warehouses or (for those towers adjacent to the Burning Sea) a shipyard. Large gates at the base of the tower give easy entrance to merchants and their caravans. Just above these floors is a smaller floor filled with apartments and reception halls. This is where merchants and other foreigners are allowed to stay while they transact their business with the gnomes. These rooms are specially prepared as they are carved to human-size. Most of the passages of the citadel, particularly in the residential sections, are carved to gnomish heights, only four to five feet of ceiling height. Rooms in houses are correspondingly small. Humans in these areas have to walk practically doubled over. As for fitting into most gnome rooms, it can often be a very tight squeeze.

The main floors above the base are filled with the workshops of the gnomes. The exact size and number of these depends on the specialties of the citadel. The oldest, Aldinanachru, built on the edge of the Burning Sea, is noted for its lava-forging, a very heavy industry. In its workshops lava is scooped from the sea, purified, and cast into forms. Some of these are bars of metal to be shipped and sold elsewhere, but often the lava-metal is fashioned into inventions in the shops of Aldinanachru. Most noted of these constructions are the fire-fleets, the strange ships able to sail on the surface of the Burning Sea.

Other citadels have different specialties. Higher in the mountains, Nabrutacildiscara, very roots descend into mines of copper and its shops fashion tools, piping, and household goods from the metal. Yahmetnacharu works in glass and ceramic materials, using secret processes to purify the hardening lava of the Cooling Land. Each citadel has workshops humming with activity as the gnome craftsmen go about their work.

Above the factories are the fungus farms and the residential sections. Although the gnomes have farms on the land surrounding the citadels, they also have facilities to grow large quantities of mushrooms within the tower itself. This is one of the lessons learned from the terrible siege of Aldinanachru. Along with these are numerous granaries, kept fully stocked.

The residential sections form the bulk of the central levels. These levels are a

maze of small passages. Households are small, limited to the immediate family only. The gnomes, particularly the elders, are proudly independent. Once married, a male gnome does his best to support his family without outside aid, moving into a separate house and going into a trade (if he has not already). Families are small, only two or three children in addition to the parents.

While households are small, it is common for entire communities to be related. Sons, fathers, grandfathers, in-laws, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, every possible relation lives within a small system of warrens. This creates a communal sharing of duties within the warren. The homes, even the hallways, all become part of an extended household. The duties of watching children are shared. Skills are shared. One household bakes breads, another hangs and smokes meat for the families, while a third may come around to do the small carpentry jobs. In this way the families work to support and provide for each other.

These small households cluster together into small knots and are known by the traditional name of "krakchow," or warrens. A group of homes (all lived in by various family members) share a central plaza/chamber, well, baths, and toilets. Other features include may be included, depending on the means of the warren—smokehouses, granaries, icehouses, and laundries are all possibilities.

Each warren is semi-isolated from all the others. Larger avenues run between the warrens like main streets. Each warren typically has gates at the tunnels that go past it. Although some rely on locks to keep their warrens secure, this is not a tremendously effective deterrent in the towers. The mechanical-minded gnomes also make excellent lockpicks and thieves; theft is one of the problems of the citadels. A more effective deterrent is to have one of the family act as gatekeeper, the job typically changing from week to week.

By custom, only family members, trusted friends, and specially honored guests are allowed within the gates of a warren. Of course, the king's guard is allowed to search any warren, rather like staging a raid. Forcing one's way into a warren is breaking and entering, even if no individual house of the warren is entered.

Casual contact, business dealings, market shopping, courtships, and investigations are conducted in the large communal halls that crop up throughout the residential levels. These can be best equated to public parks or taverns in human cities. Here old patriarchs sit on stone benches under the cooling air ducts, smoking their pipes and telling tales of the war. Workmen troop up from the shops below to draw a cool draught of ale and rest their legs before going home to their warrens. Youths scuttle under the tables, up to mischief like tying the whiskers of a sleeping graybeard to a table leg. Housewives gather to share news of children and husbands, while the heads of households read the day's proclamations pasted on the Pronouncement Pillar. Young lovers try to escape notice in dark corners. Marriage brokers sit at their customary tables awaiting the timid approach of anxious parents. In the darker halls, drunks fall sloppily to the floor, while soldiers boast of their prowess and might. Thieves and fences have huddled meetings in dark corners. Most sinister of all, dark cultists lurk in the shadows, whispering the words of their god to the circle of devotees around them. The communal rooms are the hearts of the citadel community.

Above the residential levels are a variety of functional constructions. These include the massive water cisterns that catch and purify the rains of Hitehkel (although the water still has a sulphurous taste), armories of bizarre machines of destruction, barracks, and lookouts projecting around the rim of the entire construction. A few of the citadels have small air fleets of gliders and balloons (taking advantage of the air currents generated by the Burning Sea) and these are stored in special launch and landing bays at the uppermost levels.

At the very top are the offices of the government and administration. These levels tend to be small, although Aldinanachru, being the king's tower, devotes much space to government offices. Here the workmanship varies between bland and purely functional chambers for the rows of scribes to the elaborate audience hall of the High Judge. The public places are built to be grand and impressive, using high ceilings and many windows (rare commodities elsewhere in the towers) to instill a terrified awe in those who bring their cases before the rulers. In imitation of the great Glass Tower of Aldinanachru, the tops of the citadels are carved into slender spires. Ornamental, it also serves as a mooring mast for the hot-air balloons and the highest lookout post of the citadel.

The Government and Army

The gnomes are ruled by a hereditary king. The current leader is Telemandarklosminarus IV, also known as Telemandar the Stooped. Although he is the final authority in the land, he does not become involved directly in the administration of the citadels. Instead he appoints a High Judge to each citadel, roughly akin to the governor of a province. It is the High Judge's responsibility to carry out the edicts of the King and, in turn, to rule on the grievances of his citizens. To aid him in this task, each High Judge has three groups of officials: the Judges, the Foremen, and the Captains. These three branches each has responsibility for one area of the gnomish community.

The first branch, the Judges, has authority over all justice within the tower. At the lowest level are the arbitrators. These minor officials are usually respected elders of the warrens. Each arbitrator has several warrens under his jurisdiction. The arbitrators, using custom and common sense, try to settle minor disputes between neighbors and keep the peace. An arbitrator's judgment is binding and usually involves some kind of negotiation and settlement.

Typical arbitrator cases are noise, drukenness, digging too closely to the wall of another warren, illicit romances, dumping of garbage, etc. However, if the guard must be called in, if one party challenges the arbitrator's decision, or if the

arbitrator chooses, the case is passed on to go before the Magistrate.

For each residential level there is one Magistrate. Working in cooperation with the Sergeant of the Guard who is assigned to the same level, the Magistrate oversees all the arbitrators, supervises investigations, and hears all felony cases. In addition, he rules on civil disputes passed on to him from the arbitrators.

The Magistrate's jurisdiction does have specific limits. His jurisdiction in felony is limited to injury through negligence, theft, rapine, and assault. Capital crimes of murder, arson, abduction, and treason are heard by higher courts. Even in those cases he is allowed to hear, his sentences must approved by the Court of the Citadel. For the most part this is a formality, but the higher court occasionally acts as a court of appeal.

In conducting investigations, the Magistrate has the authority to enter warrens, seize property, bind gnomes over for trial, and conduct interrogations.

The highest levels of justice are administered by the Court of the Citadel, a court of three judges appointed by the High Judge and approved by the King. These judges hear the most serious cases of murder and destruction and occasionally pass down rulings on the most difficult of civil property cases. The Court of the Citadel also hands down edicts governing the daily life of the people. The judgment of the Court is final; there are no further courts of appeal. The only recourse for those who feel wronged by the judgment is to petition the High Judge or the King, but these are not guarantees of hearings.

Indeed the system throughout is structured so that appeal is discouraged. Appeals are not automatic. The disgruntled party must petition the higher court, stating cause. If the court decides the petition is frivolous and the judgment just, it not only throws out the appeal but also fines the party that filed it. It is presumed that the previous court acted correctly and that the appeal is disruptive and unwarranted unless substantial evidence demonstrates otherwise.

The second branch of the government is the Foremen. These men have identical duties to the Judges, except that their power is limited to the shop floor. At the lowest level are the Foremen and over them are the Masters of the Science. Each specialty has its own Master. Over all is the Council of Trades. Every Master has a seat on this Council and it is chaired by the Grandmaster, an appointee chosen from the Master ranks.

In addition to the duties of judgment over the shops and the right to settle all labor disputes, the Council has the additional task of scheduling production and allocating resources for the upcoming year. This is an important decision for the gnomes and is a source of fierce politicking. Each Master fights, wheels, and deals to see that his trade is well-represented, for it is a matter of prestige (and power) not only to the Master but to all the members of his trade.



A second function of the Foremen is the maintenance of the citadels. The Foremen are responsible for inspecting all parts of the citadel and preparing recommendations for the High Judge. At the same time, additional planning for the growth of the citadel is calculated and new constructions are proposed. Funds are allocated to the task (from the taxes collected by the High Judge). Sometimes special taxes are levied or workers are conscripted for special tasks. Each Master is charged with reporting on all constructions that come under his specialty. Under corrupt Masters this is an opportunity to overcharge for work, skim funds, and bill for non-existent jobs.

This is where the third branch of the government, the Guard, comes in. The Guard is the army, police, and investigators all in one. It is their duty to serve the other branches of the government, providing them with the assistance of authority when they need it. The bulk of the work is done by the common Guardsman, the lowest rank of the Guard.

The Guardsmen are organized into companies of about 200 warriors. In addition to the Guardsmen, a company has a small number of illusionist and scout specialists. Each company has a specific designation or title and adopts some type of distinctive dress or symbol. At least one company is assigned to every level of a citadel. While it is rare for a shop level to have more than one company stationed on it, residential levels often have two or three companies working in rotation.

A company is commanded by a Knight-Commandant with the assistance of two to four Knights-Ordinary and a number of Squires. On the residential levels, the Knight-Commandant and the Magistrate work together to conduct investigations, make arrests, and keep the peace. At the same time the Knight-Commandant is responsible to the Knight-General, the commander of all

forces in the Citadel. The Knight-General in turn reports to the High Judge and the Knights of the Realm, who sit on the King's Council.

The Guard is charged with many important duties. Under the Magistrates and the Foremen, it acts as a police force. Under the direction of the Knight-General it is responsible for the overall security of the citadel. By the commands of the Knights of the Realm, the Guard patrols the lands surrounding the citadels and reports on all possible threats to the kingdom.

These tasks require a great deal of energy and diligence, so Knight-Commandants are chosen carefully. The High Judge has no say over the selection of a Knight-Commandant. These gnomes are appointed by the Knights of the Realm with the approval of the King. The Knights of the Realm receive their positions from the king and hold them for life. Knights are normally only appointed after performing some heroic feat or providing years of exceptional and stout-hearted service.

Ranks below that of Knight-Commandant are appointed by their immediate superiors, based on a combination of favoritism and occasionally skill. Wealthy gnomes can buy commissions as Squires but these normally lead to obscure postings until the Squire proves his ability. Some never do and it is not unknown to find 250-year-old Squires still in positions they have held for decades.

The arms and armor of the Guard depend on rank and duties. Common Guardsmen responsible for keeping the peace rarely wear armor and carry little more than a large, staff-like truncheon, a symbol of their office. They rely on the force of authority and reputation instead of weapons or pure martial spirit. Watchmen in the lookouts are supposed to wear leather armor, but it is not uncommon for them to set this aside during the hot days of summer. Marines of the fire-fleet also favor light-weight cool armor, although they must wear special protections to withstand the poisonous vapors.

The Company of the Dead

The Company of the Dead is the most select force of all the gnomish units. It is a large company of marines, approximately 1,000 strong. Its members are easily identified by their skull-like face paint and helmets. Their armor is far heavier than those of other marines, with elaborate and supposedly frightening ornamentations. They carry a motley assortment of weapons, each man choosing those things that he prefers. Battle axes and jagged-bladed swords are most common, but pole-swords and -axes, double-bladed fist daggers, and spiked flails are also used. They do not use missile weapons, relying on other units to provide covering fire. They are strictly a melee unit whose task is to close with the enemy and overwhelm them quickly and savagely.

What makes this company truly remarkable is the soldiers' attitudes. Every soldier, from the Knight-Commandant down, has forsaken all his possessions and all connections to his past life to become one of the Dead. Upon joining the Company, the soldier's family normally holds a funeral for him (which he may even attend!) and divides up all his possessions as an inheritance. From that point forward he is no longer acknowledged by his family, wife, children, or friends. He cannot enter the warren or place any claim on them even if he should leave the Company at some later time. During the induction, the Knight-Commandant anoints the soldier and gives him a name, to symbolize his birth anew. From this point on, the only thing the soldier has to live for is the honor and traditions of the Company.

The overriding belief of the Company is simple and clear-cut, best shown by their motto, "The dead do not fear." The gnomes of the Company sincerely believe that having "died," death can no longer terrify them. As a result, in battle they fight with savage fury. As a unit they are contemptuous of danger, unaffected by daunting odds, and oblivious to casualties. As much as possible they model themselves after the dead creatures of the earth.

Their only goal is to kill or injure the enemy, no matter what the expense. Any man of the Company who wavers is cut down by his fellows just as quickly as they would kill an enemy. They do not take prisoners unless specially ordered to do so. They do not retreat unless it is ordered for strategic or tactical necessity. They never question their orders or doubt their cause. They do not become discouraged or disheartened, for these are emotions of the living. They have a passionate love and fanatic obedience to the King, drilled into them from the day of their rebirth.

As befits such an extraordinary unit, the Company of the Dead has a long and illustrious history. It was formed during the years of the Gnomoi Wars, originally as a special command for the final storming of the Tower of Flame. The gnome and human commanders of the fire-fleet knew the assault would be difficult and dangerous since the Tower was the heart of the fire minions' realm. Those who attacked in the first wave were almost certain to die to a man, attempting to clear a path for the later waves of the assault.

Recognizing this, the commanders took only volunteers for the first wave of the assault and only after clearly explaining there was no chance of survival. Nonetheless, they still had eager volunteers. From these they selected the most able and set about training them to be even better. Special effort was made to make the Company as hard and tough as it could be. Tearful farewells were made as the volunteers set sail in the first ships of the great armada bound for the Tower of Flame.

At that great battle (still commemorated by the Company every year), the volunteers bid their companions farewell, sang their death songs and then charged forward. The defense was fierce and for a time it looked as though they would fail after all. They died in numbers beyond all understanding for normal soldiers. Still they kept fighting forward, crawling over the heaps of their dead companions, until at last they broke through the outer gates.

Perhaps as many as 95% of them died, but in doing so they breached the de-

fenses of the Tower. Their brethren followed in their wake, but the volunteers still pressed forward, whipped by the frenzy of battle to exceed their orders and enter into the corridors and chambers of the tower itself. Here they became separated into small groups as they scoured the structure. Many more died, ambushed and overwhelmed, but none surrendered. It was only when ordered to fall back that they finally withdrew, leaving behind a charnel house of blood and destruction.

In the end only one gnome of every 100 in the Company survived to return home. Although hailed as heroes, these gnomes, so committed to dying for their people, were depressed and despondent. They could not return to their homes feeling themselves marked in shame. Thus it was by a special petition to the king that the survivors were allowed to form the core of the Company of Death.

To this day, the Company has sought to maintain the same ideals, the same standards, the same fanaticism that drove those volunteers at the Tower of Flame. Several of the higher ranking officers fought in that battle and in the ones that followed. Although they have not always won every battle, they proudly stand by the fact that they have never been beaten. They may fail to reach their objective because the enemy is too great, but they have never run from a fight. Although the fire minions remain their greatest enemy, the Company has fought in other campaigns against other foes, so much that their reputation is feared even by those who have never encountered them.

Unlike all other commands, the Company of the Dead is under the sole control of the King, although it does not perform bodyguard duty. Only the King can decide when and where to use the Company, usually by assigning all or part of it to a field commander out on campaign. Generals are charged with careful instructions concerning its use; not to waste if frivolously, nor hold it back in times of need. Although subservient to the acting commander of the army, the Knight-Commandant retains the right to carry the grievances of his men directly to the king. It is fortunate for army commanders that these grievances are most often about the lack of action for the company rather than excessive campaigning or casualties!

The Priests of the Gnomes

The gnomes, although adept at the art of illusions, have never been strongly attracted to magic —wizardly or clerical. Thus when the gods departed Krynn at the time of the Cataclysm, the gnomes ultimately found it made little difference to their lives. They avoided the worst of the plagues that swept the land by isolating themselves from all others (greatly helped by the ruggedness of the terrain between them and all others). True, sickness did kill people who might have been saved before. Illness, wounds, and injuries had to be healed naturally but, given the life span of the average gnome, this was only a minor inconvenience. Thus, the people did not turn away from the gods, or their god Reorx in particular, in great numbers as happened in other lands.

Indeed, once the chaos of the Cataclysm has been sorted out and the first citadels established, the gnomes discovered that Reorx had not abandoned them at all. True, he had taken the greatest of the gnomish priests, but this was really a manifestation of his great love for his children, since he took the noblest and most faithful of his followers to their well-earned reward. This only inspired others to greater devotion in the hope that they too would one day be called. He also withdrew the gifts of spells he had given to his priests, but he replaced this with the greater gift of the lava, which he extended to everyone. There was a time of trial and hardship, but in general, the gnomes feel their life is better now than it had ever been before. Thus for them the Cataclysm is know as the time of Reorx's Gift.

Because the people did not become discouraged, neither did the priests and priestess of Reorx. Although bereft of their powers, they continued on with their faith, striving harder than before in



hope that some day they too would become one of the chosen to ascend into his realm. Over the years, the tenets of the faith and the hierarchy were modified. Where previously those with exceptional priestly power had been exalted, now the greatest priests are also among the most inventive builders and designers of the gnomes. After all, Reorx bestowed the gift of readily available metal on the people, so it is therefore only right for the priests to excel in its use.

As with most religions, the priests of Reorx have a distinctive dress. Most of their clothes are common in appearance—the shirt, pants, and boots of a workman. However, each priest wears an apron and towering miter as a sign of his station.

The apron, modelled after those worn in the foundries, is a thick leather piece, hardened like leather armor and embossed with the symbol of their faith—a hammer rising from a crescent moon. Those higher in the ranks of the priests have more elaborate aprons—tooling, gilt edges, and painted designs all indi-

cate the status of the priest.

Each priest also wears a miter-like hat that shows his function within the church. There are hats for daily priests, teachers of the arts, high priests, and interpreters of the law, the highest rank of all. These become more and more ornate until reaching the highest level where the hats are of the utmost simplicity.

The seminaries of the priests also changed. While they had always been institutions of higher learning with emphasis on engineering, they have since come to teach more sciences and fewer applied theological mysteries. Students are still taught the philosophies and rituals as the most important part of their training, but the applied skills that were once necessary for spellcasting have been discarded. Instead, more and more courses relate to using the gift Reorx has given.

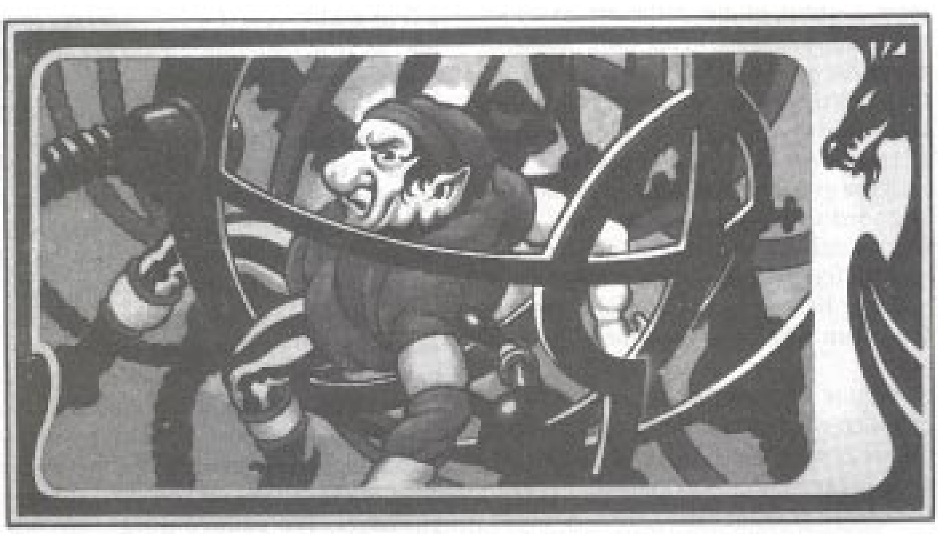
As a result of this shift, even though Reorx has returned to the gnomes of Taladas, he has bestowed priestly powers on only a few of his priests. It is not for lack of faithfulness on their part, but because he finds their new direction and energy pleasing. Always one interested in the crafts and building arts, he sees the gnomes gradually elevating, these from science to religion, all in his name and for his glory. Currently, there is no reason for him to interfere.

Other gods and goddesses have never fared well among the gnomes, given their obvious inclinations. Most of those cults that existed prior to the Cataclysm have dwindled or died away in the decades that followed. Furthermore the priests of Reorx have attacked many of these as unscientific and therefore dangerous to the morals of the people, particularly the young. While there has never been any official action on the part of the King or the High Judges, the priests have successfully convinced most to heed their words.

As a result, only two small cults flourish (if it can be called that). There are a few followers of Mislaxa who practice healing arts. These the priests of Reorx portray as superstitious quacks, pushing useless powders and pseudo-rituals. In many ways the priestesses of Mislaxa are treated like gypsy fortune-tellers, considered by most to be fakes but wholeheartedly subscribed to by a few. The priestesses have more acceptance among the lower classes of workers than among the better educated upper class.

The second cult is that of Hiteh and Erestem (who are always treated as a pair by the gnomes). This cult needs no branding by the priests of Reorx, for it is universally hated and feared by all good gnomes. The gnomish citadels have been on the forefront of the wars against the forces of the evil gods too long for them to believe the pair are anything but malevolent and dangerous.

Nonetheless, there are always some among the gnomes willing to listen to the seductive promises of power and greatness that these gods offer. These cultists must meet in secret, lest they be discovered and exposed to the public. Followers of the evil gods are universally considered dangerous, often accused of acts of treason against the king, if for no other reason than that they do worship the gods of the enemy.



These fears are not without grounds. The two gods are quick to grant their followers priestly power, both to crush their enemies and to seduce new followers. The promises of power all come with one condition, the overthrow of the King and his supporters. Only in this way can the cultists come to power. They have no desire to work with the government or the other priests. Their power must be absolute or it fails entirely. To this end, cultists have cooperated with the fire minions, sometimes with full knowledge of their deeds, but more often foolishly believing that once they attain power they will be able to deal with their former allies from the Burning Sea. This, of course, is not what Hiteh or Erestem have in mind at all.

GNOMISH INVENTIONS

The gnomes of the Spires are far more than just architects or engineers who spend their days carving out their citadels. They are passionate inventors and builders of wonderful and sometimes absurd devices, large and small. Making things, particularly things that have never been made before, is an unquenchable instinct that has been raised to a respected art in their society. Every gnome, no matter what his trade, invents; some just do it better or on a grander scale than others.

Gnomish inventions fall into two groups: gnomoi and minoi, practical and impractical. It is a mistake of many foreigners, having a passing familiarity with gnomish society, to believe that all gnomoi inventions are practical, while none of those of the minoi are. The actual situation is not as clear as this. There are impractical gnomoi devices and practical

minoi ones. At best, each group tends to follow certain tendencies.

It is often assumed that the gnomoi build the most practical designs. In truth, the gnomoi are no more apt to be practical than their minoi cousins; it is just that they are likely to build things that work the way they were intended. A gnomoi is almost as likely as a minoi to build an automatic chicken plucker, the biggest difference being the gnomoi will build one that plucks the chicken without destroying dinner.

The prized logic of the gnomoi enables them to think through all the steps and find the best method. Sometimes it enables them to see that a design is pointless before beginning. (In the case of the chicken plucker, a gnomoi might realize that hands do the job easier and perhaps better.) At the same time, the gnomoi and the minoi both have a love of machines that results in a few extra gears and wheels, turning a simple device into a complex one.

Despite their general tendencies, the minoi are not entirely impractical. More than once a minoi has set out to build something intentionally complicated and ultimately impractical, only to create an elegant invention that does something else. Of course, the minoi inventer considers the whole thing a failure since he didn't build what he set out to make. It takes others, minoi and gnomoi, to see the usefulness of his device. What started as a wringer dryer may end up as a steel roller on the foundry floor.

Of course, there are minoi inventions that don't work as planned or work all too well. Human visitors to the citadels often return with alarming reports of explosions, holes blown in walls, narrow escapes from grabbing chicken pluckers, and polite invitations to test fly the latest improved version of the one-man glider. (If asked, the previous models were "not entirely successful.") These same occurrences are nothing extraordinary or even distressing to the gnomes. They expect runaway steam-powered wall scrubbers, hiccupping elevators, and wildly slashing robot warriors.

Just as the Ice People of the Panak Desert have 27 different words to describe all the different types of snow they recognize, the gnomes of the Spires have 34 different expressions for "Look out!" One translates as "Fall flat on your belly," another as "Don't step on that," a third as "RUN!" and so forth. Each defines a different degree, nature, or direction of danger.

Of course there are limitations to gnomish technology. They have extraordinary skill at mechanical engineering and can do amazing things with cables, pulleys, springs, and gears. Likewise, they are masters at smelting and refining various metals, iron and steel by far the most important. (They are the largest smelters of iron in all of Taladas.)

In the last few centuries they have been experimenting with steam power. They haven't gotten it down perfectly, but they have built some incredibly (indeed overly) complex devices that run on steam. Still, their primitive steam engines tend to explode and are treated with a great deal of respect. Only recently some of the citadels have begun to experiment with geothermal energy for heating and steam. At least once this has led to lava flooding a section of the lowest level of a citadel.

On the other hand, gnomes have virtually no understanding or use for electricity. True, they can generate electrical charges of great power, but except as a defense (charging the outer gates, etc.) they have no idea what to do with it. Furthermore, they do not care to find out. Electricity doesn't have mechanical parts and simply isn't interesting. Likewise their grasp of chemistry is basic, almost nonexistent. They care for physics only as it applies to machines and do not make regular studies in it. Botany and zoology are idle curiosities. Geology is taught on the purely practical level of mining and excavation.

Although they enjoy magical devices and certainly are not about to disdain magical items (particularly weapons and armor), the gnomes try not to use magic in their machines (although some nongnomes might say their technological devices are magical). To their mind, it's too much like cheating. They strive to build pure machines without the aid of otherworldly powers.

Within these limits the gnomes have created many amazing devices. By far the two best known to the outside world are the fire-fleets and the windships.

The fire-fleets are iron ships built to sail without sails or oars upon the very surface of the Burning Sea. Somehow the gnomes forged materials that will not melt even at the extreme temperatures of the Burning Sea. Just how they have accomplished this is one of their closest-kept secrets. Although it is uncertain that anyone else could make the metal or what they would do with it if they could, the gnomes believe there would be disastrous results if their process were known. As a result, the secret of the fire-fleet is one that is sought by many of their enemies.

The second great invention they are still in the process of perfecting are the windships. Shortly after settling the edges of Hitehkel, the gnomes discovered that the boiling heat of the lava created powerful air currents. It was not long before the gnomes began experimenting with the principles of soaring. In a short time, they had working prototypes of the one-man glider and huge battlekites. Now nearly all the citadels have a small troop of Guardsmen equipped with gliders and kites.

The gliders are used to scout the enemy, battle flying creatures such as dragons, and make harassing bombing attacks (usually pinpointing the tents of enemy commanders). The kites, moored to the top of the citadel, protect the tower from flying assaults in times of siege. They are also used as stable (well, almost) platforms for missile fire and observation.

Now, however, the gnomes are working on an even larger project, the windships. These vessels, ships slung beneath great gas-filled bags, are seen sometimes over skies as distant as Kristophan, much to the consternation of the local citizens. The gnomes have been working to improve the range and capacity of these airships, both for use as weapons in their war against the fire minions and as trading vessels. Once they have perfected the de-

sign to their satisfaction, they will begin a program of production throughout the citadels. Someday they hope to build an armada of windships and fire-fleets powerful enough to destroy the Tower of Flame once and for all. Clearly this is a goal the fire minions and their allies do not want to see realized.

THE SKY CITADELS

Once there was one gnomish invention that did combine the arts of magic and technology, something not done today. In the earliest years after the Cataclysm, a faction of the gnomes decided the only safety for their people lay in leaving Krynn entirely. Try as they might, they could not design a pure machine that would carry them into the supposedly safer reaches of space. (Little did they know what was waiting out there!) Determined to succeed, this faction did the unthinkable and combined magical spells and magical items into their design. The end result was the giant, floating rocks known as the sky citadels.

Only a few of the sky citadels were ever made and fewer still were launched. The project and its difficulties were immense, even by gnomish standards. In addition to the mechanical controls and devices that had to be made and the tremendously powerful magical items and enchantments that were needed, the sky citadels also demanded that entire mountaintops be carved away. The process was painstaking. First a suitable peak was found and a town built around it. Then stone workers and engineers would begin the process of excavation. The rooms, corridors, and chambers were carved from the rock, machinery was installed, and the magical items were prepared. At last, when everything was installed, the final quarrying would begin. Slowly the carved peak was undercut and mined out until it was literally cut away from the rest of the mountain. If all had been done correctly, the mountain peak, now the sky citadel, would hover gently in the air.

It didn't always work that way. If any of the calculations were in error, the whole thing might come crashing down. On one occasion the calculations erred the other way and the citadel shot into the sky as the final bonds were severed. Another sky citadel was destroyed even before launching when the entire peak erupted in volcanic fury. In the end, these setbacks combined with the disillusionment of the people spelled the end of the whole project.

Of the seven citadels that were worked on, one was destroyed by a volcano, another disappeared into the heavens, one was swept away in a mighty storm (and later appeared in Ansalon), the fourth crashed on launching, two were successfully built (and are still used to this day), and the last was abandoned before completion. This last can be seen as the half-carved peak of Mt. Whiterock, even to this day. Long abandoned by the gnomes, it has become a lair for foul creatures of all types.

THE TOWER OF FLAME

At the very heart of the Burning Sea, at the center of Hitehkel, stands a singular structure, unique not just to Taladas or even Krynn but perhaps to the very plane itself. Looking upon it, one is filled with wonder and fear. It is the Flaemchaldar of the gnomes, the Tower of Flame.

Seen at a distance, the Tower of Flame looks not like a building at all but a twisting, leaping column of fire. It seems to roar up out of the sea of lava, sucking its life from the scorching magma. It dances in the winds yet stays rooted to one spot. See closer up, the walls flicker and writhe, curling upward with hues of fiery orange, brilliant yellows, and occasional hints of blue. Millions of flames dance and play within its surfaces. Tiny jets of fire here and there may lash out, tear away, and spiral quickly upward into nothingness. Curls of sooty black smoke rise from the corners.

Upon reaching its base the most astonishing discovery is made. Clever observers have deduced by this point that the tower is made not of stone or metal but of living fire, magically trapped into the walls of the spire. Surely they reason, this is the work of the fire minions, a manifestation of their true realm, and so only those creatures could live within the intense heat of the tower's walls. But the flame of the tower is not hot. The walls are warm perhaps, but not scalding. The air is thick and sere, but not choking with the poisonous gases of the Burning Sea. Somehow, through great magic, the Tower of Flame is habitable to men and their kin.

On close inspection, the walls of the tower are seen to be made of thousands of tiny, leaping swirling bands of fire. These walls radiate no heat and are not hot to the gentle touch. They are firm but not solid, yielding to a determined push. Penetrating beyond the surface layer of the wall causes scorches and burns, for whatever magic contains the flame does not diminish its power.

The floors are equally wonderful and bizarre, like standing on pools of magma. They constantly swirl and bubble as if they were welling up from below. Like the walls they radiate no heat, but their surfaces are as hard as marble. It is a strange feeling. Although the floors are solid, reason tells many they are standing on the pit of doom, inducing an uncontrollable panic. More than one visitor has frozen to one spot, terrified to move, convinced his next step will be into the fiery cauldron beneath him.

The wondrous materials of the tower are not its only surprise. The instant one steps within its portals, the air is sweet and pure. Outside, billowing clouds of sulphur-laden gas, thick with poisons, swirl past open windows and doors yet none of this enters the tower. Even when standing upon balconies and spires one can breathe safely. The entire tower seems to be encased in an unbreakable bubble of air.

No one knows the true history of the Tower of Flame. Its inaccessibility and dark purpose have hidden its past from the scholars of the mortal world. The gnomes with their proximity and their devices are the most knowledgeable about the tower. The first mentions of its existence come from a gnome scout who sighted it while soaring over the Burning Sea. For many decades after that, it could only be observed from the air and then

only by a perilous glider journey.

Since its discovery there has been much speculation as to the nature and builders of the tower. It is most commonly thought to be the center and stronghold of the forces of Hiteh. More romantic claims, unconfirmed rumors, and the tall tales of the old folk claim that it is the creation of the Grathanich. Once loosed from its moorings, the magical stone wandered the world until it returned here at the time of the Cataclysm. Plunged into the pit of Hitehkel, it magically raised up the tower. Now somewhere within the Tower of Flame rests the Grathanich holding it all together like the keystone of an arch—at least that is how the story goes.

Dismissed as fanciful myth by the "practical" gnomoi, there is some truth to the tale. The tower is a creation of the Grathanich and a small portion of the stone can be found there. Of course, no one knows this. If the gnomes did, each and every one of them would be trying to get the stone back.

Since its discovery, the tower has been scouted and observed (from the air only) many times. Fire creatures have been seen assembled outside it. Reports sometimes come in of evil dragons landing on its terraces. There were even tales of men standing on its balconies. These could only have been wizards who used their sorcerous powers to transport themselves there. Clearly these visitors were up to no good purpose. Even before the wars with the fire minions, the Tower of Flame had an evil reputation.

As the Gnomoi War got underway, the gnome generals began considering plans to assault the tower. As best they could tell, it was clearly the center of the fire minions' domain. If it fell, the war might be ended in one swoop. The problem was how to reach it. Its position in the center of a lava sea did not make it easily accessible. Attempts were made to send flights of gliders, but the journey was too long for most and the result was disaster.

A small team of wizards tried to teleport themselves and elite warriors into the tower. Without accurate information on their final destination, the team was scattered all over, Some appeared on the surface of the Burning Sea and died instantly. Others disappeared without a trace. A few actually arrived in the tower but were scattered throughout its buildings. Separated from each other, they were easy victims for the guards. Only a few managed to return and tell of the failure. Still, they managed to provide valuable information about what little they had seen.

It was for the assault of the Tower that the fire-fleets were invented. Before this there had never been a need to venture onto the dangerous surface of the Burning Sea. It was only through the brilliant work of the great Maker who invented the secret processes to build the ships of the fire-fleet. Following his processes and designs, the Councils of all the citadels began a program of building the armada that would carry the warriors to the Tower of Flame. It took some time before the program was complete, since the construction was hampered by the war. However, the gnomes eventually built enough ships to carry the forces on the dangerous voyage.

And dangerous it was. The trip alone to the Tower of Flame was the thing of epics. Geysers of lava, nights lit by the glow of molten rock, attacks by creatures that rose from the magma—one by one ships fell away. Some had their machinery fail, others drifted away in the night, and fire minions overwhelmed many more, but the armada pressed on. After many perils, the Tower of Flame was sighted.

With the death commandos of the Company of the Dead in the lead, the fire-fleets made the final assault. Their enemies were ready. The foul minions of Hiteh's army were arrayed many ranks deep. At full power the ships of the fleet crashed into their lines, the dead gnomes of the Company on the prows. Fiery hands reached from the flaming morass, grinding the unmeltable metal between their claws. Flight upon flight of flaming bolts filled the sky. Still, all the might of Hitehkel's forces could not prevent the gnomes from reaching the tower.

But neither could the gnomes hold their prize. A few hundred men reached the tower's walls, still surrounded by the enemy. In desperation they battled to cling to their prize, but in the end they were forced to retreat. For an entire day they battled their way backward, feinting and thrusting through the trap that had closed about them. Finally the few remaining ships broke free and put on steam for home. Battered though they were, they left behind an enemy more bloodied still. It was a victory, but a pyrrhic one at best.

It was in the assault on the Tower of Flame that the gnomes learned the secret of who opposed them. Before they had always believed they faced some foe from the plane of Fire. In their brief time in the temple, they learned their real foe. All throughout were shrines and altars to Hiteh the Merchant, one of the great gods of evil. At that point the gnomes realized the scope of the battle they were fighting. Although some quailed at the thought, many more only strengthened in their resolve. Those cultists among them, who had previously preached openly, were lynched or driven from the citadels. It was remembered as the great night of the cleansing of the warrens.

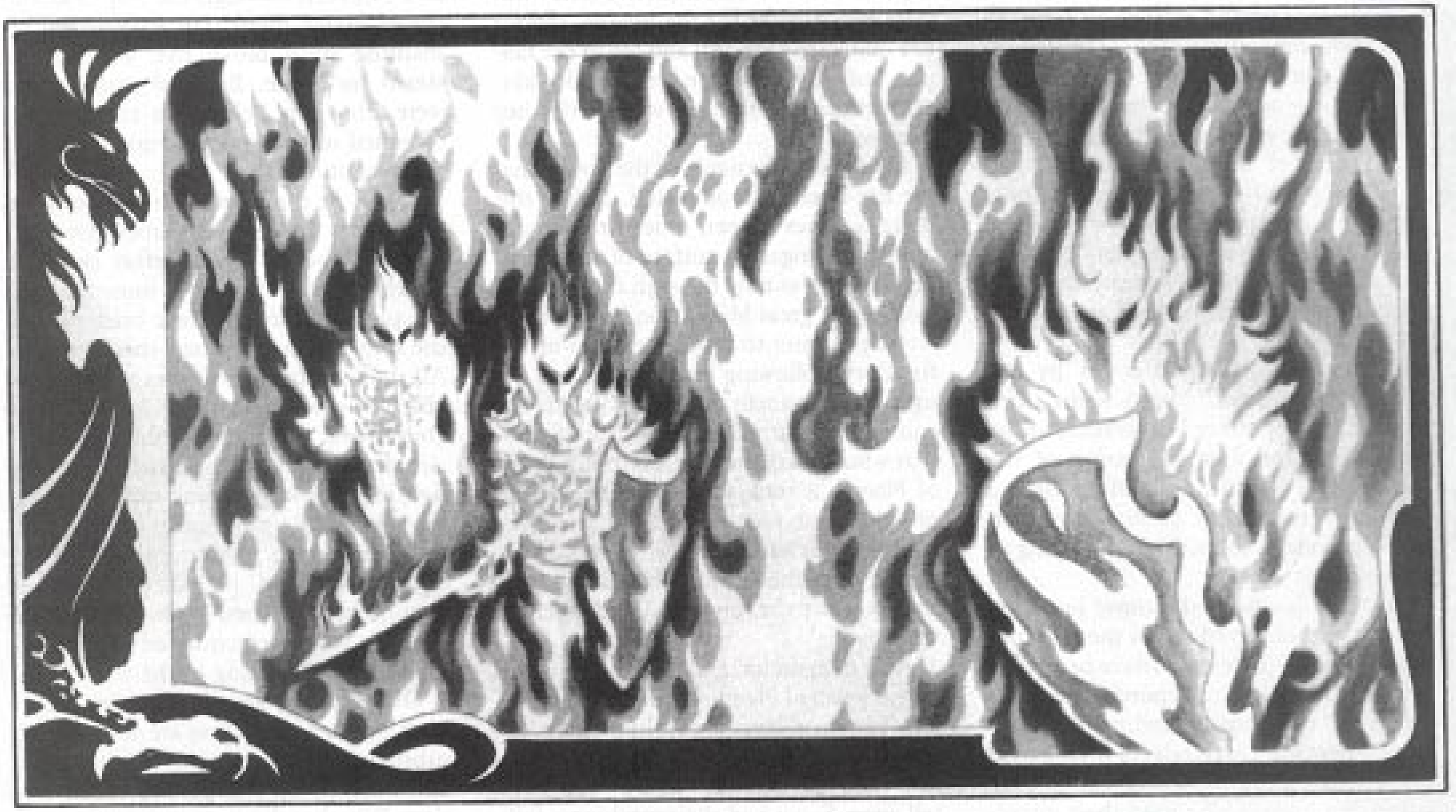
Other rumors also persist from the assault on the tower. There are of course unsubstantiated accounts of great bravery and heroism on the part of fallen warriors. Whether these are true or not is unimportant, as they give the people heroes. Of the other rumors, the two most persistent are about the Grathanich and the mysterious stranger.

The Grathanich story is simple and thrives to this day. Supposedly the stone was seen in the tower, usually said to be set in an archway or balanced atop a slender pillar. It has been told so many times that people assume there must be some truth to it. There is no evidence, no one can find an eyewitness, but people simply point to the existence of the tower as proof that the magical stone of Reorx is there.

The second story is told less frequently, but has ominous undertones. According to some of the soldiers who reached the tower, there was a man, a human dressed in the robes of Hiteh's priests, on one of

the uppermost floors of the spire. He was seen directing and commanding all the forces of Hiteh. This has been verified by several eyewitnesses, although their details sometimes differ.

Careful inquiries by wizards using magical means have sometimes revealed a shadowy form, but the identity of this stranger remains unknown. Some claim he is the high priest of Hiteh in all of Taladas, others say that he is Hiteh himself manifesting his form in the world of the gnomes. No one knows for sure, but they are convinced he is still alive.



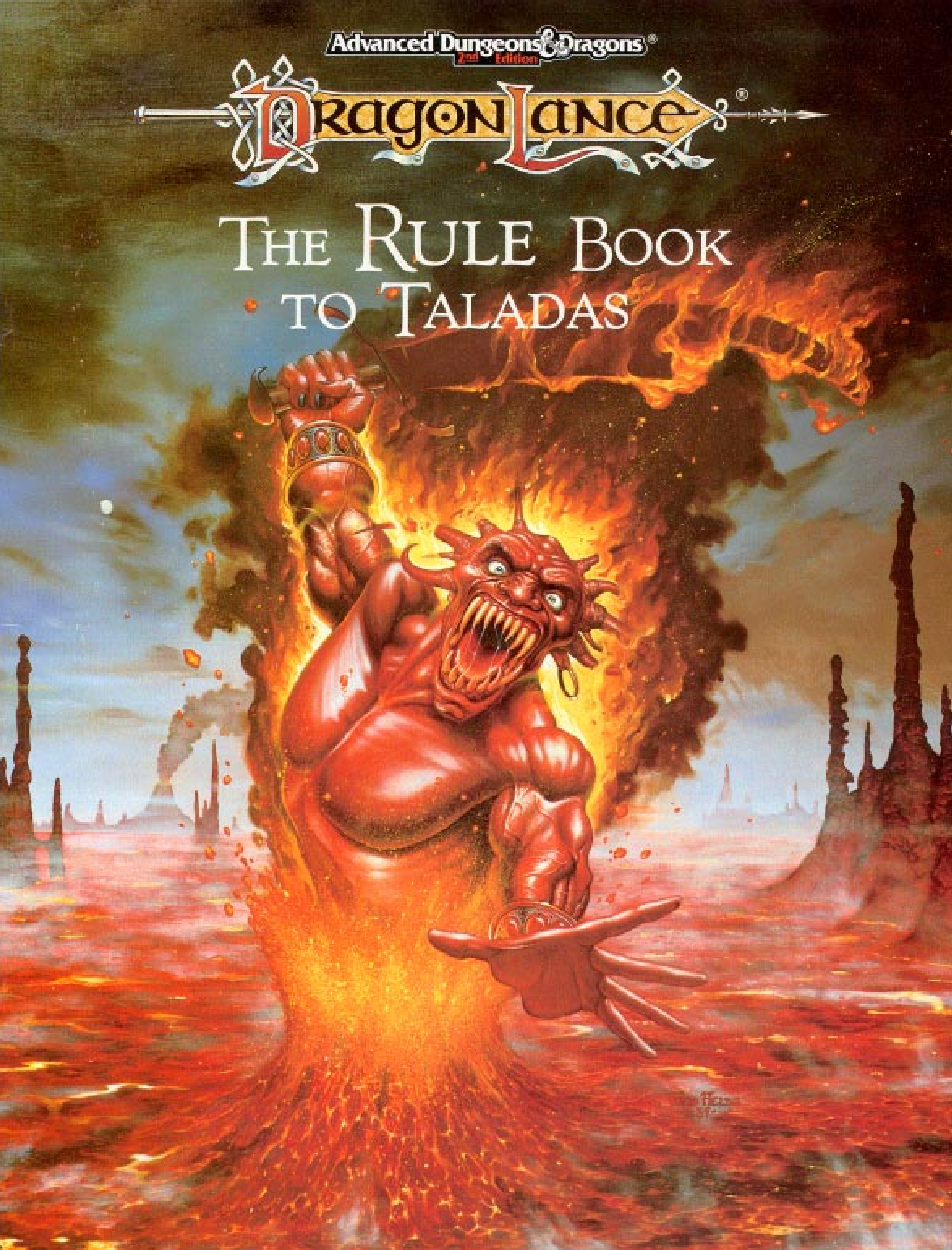
TSR, Inc.
PRODUCTS OF YOUR IMAGINATION™

1050XXX1901

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons® 2nd Edition

DRAGONLANCE®

THE RULE BOOK TO TALADAS



DRAGONLANCE®

Official Game Accessory

Rule Book of Taladas

by David "Zeb" Cook

Table of Contents

Credits

Editing: Mike Breault, with Jon Pickens
Editorial Coordinator: Karen Boomgarden
Cover Illustrations: Fred Fields
Interior Illustrations: Stephen Fabian
Cartography: Diesel
Graphic Design: Stephanie Tabat
Typography: Gaye O'Keefe
Keylining: Roy Parker

Distributed to the book trade by Random House, Inc., and in Canada by Random House of Canada, Ltd. Distributed to the toy and hobby trade by regional distributors. Distributed in the United Kingdom by TSR Ltd.

ISBN 0-88038-773-4

1050XXX1502

TSR, Inc.
POB 756
Lake Geneva,
WI 53147 USA

TSR, Inc.
PRODUCTS OF YOUR IMAGINATION™

TSR Ltd.
120 Church End, Cherry Hinton
Cambridge CB1 3LB
United Kingdom

If you have read the *Guide Book to Taladas,* you will have noticed by now that it describes the peoples and cultures of a world, with descriptions that often go to great length and detail. There are details about their dress, their lives, and many other important factors in their lives. Places, governments, cultures, and beliefs are set out and explained, but there is no game material. These things are not mentioned at all in the Guide Book.

The Guide Book's purpose is not to create a set of rules about Taladas or a group of little adventures against the background of a new setting. It is describing a complete world or, at least, many of the more interesting features of it. As such, Taladas is not a collection of game rules, character statistics, and monsters. It is a land filled with cultures and peoples. To give you the materials needed to create complete and unique adventures that measure up to the standards of the adventures in Ansalon, the Guide Book describes more detail than may ever have been seen in a single role-playing adventure. The intention is to provide you, as the DM, with enough background information to create your own adventures set against a well-developed backdrop.

Of course, there are rules and game information you do need. These are given in this book, separate from the descriptions of countries and people found in the Guide Book. The material here includes new player character races, adjustments to classes to fit the world of Taladas, kits for creating customized characters from the different peoples of the world, BATTLESYSTEM™ rules rosters and army information, encounter tables, and new monsters. Keeping these separate enables you to show players sections of the Guide Book (to familiarize them with things their characters should know), although you do not have to do this.

In addition to new rules material, there is also information on adapting some of the existing rules to the special conditions of Taladas. These include rules found in the AD&D® 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook,* the 2nd Edition *Dungeon Master's Guide,* and the *DRAGONLANCE® Adventures* book. It is recommended that DMs have a copy of this last book since it contains much information about the world of Krynn in general.

Taladas is not a generic place set within a nondescript world. Krynn, the planet of the DRAGONLANCE saga, is a very particular place. If you are unfamiliar with the conventions and background of Krynn, you should take the time to become familiar with this unique world. Information can be found in the *DRAGONLANCE Adventures* book, *The Mists of Krynn, The World of Krynn,* the module series (DL1-14 and DLE1-3) and the novel series.

While these describe events, people, and places from the other side of the world, there are many factors that remain constant throughout all of Krynn. These include ancient history, the origins of different races, the availability of certain metals, the effects of the moons on magic, and the attitudes of the gods. In addition, recent events that have occurred on Ansalon (which is on the other side of the world) have repercussions throughout the entire planet. Again, it is strongly recommended that you take the time to familiarize yourself with all of Krynn before using this set.

Taladas, however, is not Ansalon and the differences are reflected in the Guide and Rule Books. Events and circumstances (and thus character options) are tightly scripted in the continent of Ansalon; the War of the Lance dominates almost every aspect of the player characters' lives. This is not the case in Taladas. Here, the War has had only an indirect impact. Some events, such as the Flight of the Gods, were felt throughout the world, but many, many others were of no concern to the people of Taladas. Just what ultimate effect the War of the Lance (and its outcome) has on Taladas is left for you to decide.

Unlike the information published for Ansalon, the materials here concentrate on the cultures and societies of Taladas and less on the fantastic sights and magic. To be sure, many of the societies described are fantastic in their own right, but there are many other wondrous places and weird magical devices to be found. These are left for you to provide, allowing you to create ruins, magical orbs, long-lost weapons, or whatever is needed for your adventures. The unique societies and their interactions here will provide you with many starting ideas for good adventures.

PLAYER CHARACTER RACES

In Taladas, players have more options for player character races than they have had before. In addition to the normal assortment of humans, elves, half-elves, dwarves, gnomes, and kender, Taladan characters can also be minotaurs, goblins, ogres, and bakali. Furthermore, familiar races have new and different attitudes, and in the case of the gnomes, improved abilities. These new choices are best reserved for experienced players who are adept at role-playing the existing character races.

Although characters can choose to be one of the new races listed in this book, they are not required to do so. They can also choose to be one of the player character races listed in the *DRAGONLANCE® Adventures* book. Of course, many of these characters are particular to the continent of Ansalon and so may be less than common on Taladas. Special considerations concerning each race are summarized below.

FAMILIAR PC RACES

Humans: Humans have no special considerations or limitations. They are equally prevalent in both halves of the world.

Dwarves: Player characters can choose to be Scorned or Fianawar dwarves in addition to the standard choices of mountain or hill dwarf. These latter two are uncommon throughout Taladas, found in small, widely scattered communities or in foreigner (Ansalon) quarters in the major ports of the League. Gully dwarves are not native to Taladas and it is doubt-

ful that anyone (certainly not the minotaurs) would see any benefit in shipping them to Taladas to plague the inhabitants of that continent.

Elves: The majority of elves in Taladas are from the Elf Clans and Silvanaes with smaller numbers of Hulderfolk and Cha'anii. There are very few elves like those found in Ansalon—Silvanesti, Qualinesti, or Kagonesti. Those that do appear have all arrived from overseas.

Kender: Kender are very rare on Taladas and the majority of those known are from the Marak region and are thus not a race well-loved by most others. However, there are small groups of kender who retain attitudes similar to their Ansalon cousins. In addition, their natural curiosity has prompted many of this race to travel to distant lands, Ansalon included.

NEW PC RACES

Bakali

The bakali are a race of lizard men found in the vast expanses of Blackwater Glade. Though savage, brutal, and uneducated, they are not unintelligent. Indeed, they are cunning and quick to learn, although they do have their limitations. Magical arts are beyond them and the power of their priests are limited by their savage lizard god—Siarrlas the Scaled One (Chislev). Bakali can be fighters or clerics (to Chislev). No other options are available to them.

Bakali range in height from six to eight feet and are correspondingly strong and muscular. Their hides range in color from yellow-green to mottled brown and are heavily plated, much like those of crocodiles. They have long, powerful tails that they can lash about. A dorsal ridge runs the length of the spine, starting at the back of the skull and finally disappearing about halfway down the tail. Their hands and feet have vestigial claws, menacing-looking but not effective in combat. The hands and feet are webbed and the talons of the hands are used like fingers.

The bakali are distrustful and suspicious by nature. More than most races they keep to themselves and seldom leave their own territories. To others they seem savage and bloody-minded, and they are usually portrayed as crueler than they really are. Although this attitude is too simple a stereotype, it is not entirely unwarranted; the bakali, as a race, have no qualms or particularly strong moral compunctions against violence, although individuals may hold more tolerant or peaceful views.

The stereotype is reinforced by their dislike of strangers, humans in particular. The bakali have had bad relations with the Swampers for several centuries. Consequently they have their own stereotypes about humans-greedy, lying, thieving, and murderous scoundrels. Few humans are befriended by the bakali.

Although they may be frequently hostile to humans, the bakali are not without honor. They have long memories, remembering both the good and ill done to them. They treat others as others treat them. If a man is fair and honorable, even if he is an enemy, the bakali treat him with the same respect.

They place great store in friendships and alliances, among their own kind and with other races. If an outsider manages to befriend a bakali, the bond will last until the trust is betrayed.

The bakali are also courageous, having no fear of death. Theirs is a courage, however, that does not cause them to charge foolishly forward. They do not fear death but they do enjoy life. Although savage, they are not stupid. Indeed, they are particularly skilled at war. Using deception, ambushes, and even retreats are not cowardly acts if the situation calls for it. Anything associated with war-in victory or defeat-is considered courageous.

The bakali dwell in the warm waters of Blackwater Glade. Although they are warm- blooded, the bakali are vulnerable to cold and suffer 1 extra point of damage per die of damage caused by cold-based attacks. Their tough hides serve as natural armor, such that an adult has a skin equal to Armor Class 7. Bakali have a basic movement rating of 9. Quite naturally, all bakali are powerful swimmers, able to move equally well on land or water. Bakali do not possess infravision. They possess a special nictating membrane that can quickly shield their eyes from harm. Thus, they gain a + 1 bonus to all saving throws that involve blinding or dazzling of the eyes.

Because of their sturdy and muscular frames, all bakali gain a + 1 bonus to their Strength and Constitution scores. However, their lack of education and appearance give them a -1 penalty to their Intelligence and Charisma.

Gnomoi

The gnomoi are one of the two main branches of gnomes found in Taladas, the other being the minoi. (The abilities and limitations of the minoi are described in the *DRAGONLANCE® Adventures* book under the description of tinker gnomes.) In appearance, the gnomoi (and the minoi) are no different from the standard gnome description. What differences that do exist are variations according to region and clan. Indeed, gnomoi and minoi are physically identical.

Mentally it is quite another matter. The gnomoi are "true gnomes." Unlike the minoi (many of whom became the tinker gnomes of Ansalon), the gnomoi are more organized and logical, traits that result in greater success for their inventions and devices. However, logic and organization still do not mean practicality. While the gnomoi can build devices that function correctly (as opposed to the disastrous results of the minoi), they do not necessarily build things more useful or sensible. All gnomes, the gnomoi included, have an inordinate love of devices and constructions to the point where they will overbuild a device-simply to make it "better."

Gnomoi player characters can choose to be fighters, clerics (or priests), illusionists, thieves, and tinkers. In addition, they can be fighter/illusionists or fighter/thieves.

Gnomoi have all the powers and abilities of standard gnomes, including the Constitution bonus, infravision, and detection abilities. In addition, the gnomoi

are more adept as tinkers (described in the *DRAGONLANCE® Adventures* book). When playing a gnomoi tinker, the following modifications should be made to the class.

Technologies: Gnomoi technologies consist of the following:

Aerodynamics	Mathematics
Architecture	Mechanics
Ceramics	Metallurgy
Chemistry	Optics
Communication	Perpetual Motion
Hydraulics	Pneumatics
Hydrodynamics	Sonics
Kinetics	Thermodynamics
Magnetics	Transportation

Master Craftsgnome: Only one master craftsgnome can be found per profession instead of just per colony.

Proficiencies: The gnomoi are not as hapless at the non-weapon proficiencies they learn, and so do not have any penalty when these are used.

THAC0 and Saving Throws: All tinkers fight equal to wizards of the same level. Their saving throws are equal to a priest's of the same level.

Gnome Devices: While the strictures of size and redundancy still hold true for the gnomoi, that concerning complexity is not quite the same. While the gnomoi do build devices more complex than needed, their inventions work-though admittedly in a roundabout and complex fashion. When determining the complexity of an item, halve all complexity modifiers for those items designed solely by gnomoi characters. (Unfortunately, minoi assistance tends to result in unwarranted "improvements.")

When the die is rolled to see if the invention is successful, a gnomoi inventor adds 1 to the die roll for every point of Intelligence he has above 10. Thus, a 14 Intelligence tinker gains a +4 bonus to all success die rolls. The inventor must be the sole builder. If he is not the sole builder, but was the head of the project, only half the normal modifier is used (fractions rounded down).

Goblins

In the words of the theologian and scholar Camoen of Kristophan, the goblins are one of the "...four ill-favored races, created by the gods to teach men humility. Where man stands straight, they stand crooked. Where man's voice is clear, they bark in the tongue of animals. While the learned man aspires to clarity of thought, the ill-favored are naught but beasts. Thus are men raised by the grace of the gods above these kinds." Although a fine moral lesson for mankind, this is hardly a sentiment the goblins share.

Contrary to the low expectations and opinions of the "civilized" races (human, elf, dwarf, kender, and gnome), goblins are a fairly advanced and civilized group. They have recognizable cultures and have learned most, if not all, skills of the world. However, there is no denying the bestial side of their nature and this hampers their development and advancement in the adventuring classes.

Goblins can be fighters, rangers, priests, and thieves. In addition, they can



be multi-class characters, combining the thief class with any other allowed. Although they tend to excel as thieves and do well as fighters, they lack the calm patience needed to rise to high levels as rangers or priests.

Being small of stature, goblins cannot use weapons that are of large or greater size. Their eyes are sensitive to bright sunlight, causing them to have a - 1 penalty to their attack roll. The same sensitivity gives them infravision, allowing them to see 60 feet in total darkness. They can note new construction and large stonework traps on a roll of 1 on 1d4. Possibly because they inured themselves to filth and decay by living in it, all goblins gain a + 1 bonus to their saving throws when resisting any type of disease, normal or magical.

While not as animalistic or crude as most other races portray them, goblins are far from saints. Few, if any, of their race are ever good, the majority being unconcerned about the sufferings and woes of others. They have no love of other humanoids, good or evil, although their dislike becomes most passionate with gnomes, dwarves, and elves. The power humans can wield awes them, but the foibles and weaknesses of the race (compassion, kindness, and mercy; traits not often displayed by the other races) they scorn. Ogres, while certainly respected for their power, are considered to be dolts and brutes. Of all the races, minotaurs evoke the most respect from goblins, as the bull-men combine power and ruthlessness. To ease their envy, goblins point out that minotaurs are disfigured by the heads of oxen and cows. Indeed they find this a useful insult for irking the elitist minotaurs.

Small in stature, goblins suffer a -1 penalty to their Strength score. At the same time, they are quick (and habitually larcenous) and so gain a + 1 bonus to Dexterity.

Minotaurs

Of all the races in Taladas, none are more feared and respected than the minotaurs. Standing seven feet or more in height, not only do they overawe others with their physical presence, but, accustomed to command, they radiate auras of leadership and authority.

They are supremely confident in their own abilities and destiny, so much so that they treat others with arrogance and contempt. They do not apologize for their own greatness and indeed seek to impress it upon all others at any opportunity. This overbearing attitude quickly becomes insufferable to others, but is made worse by the fact (especially within the lands of the League) that, more often than not, they are right. They do have more power, both physical and political, than most other groups in the world.

Yet their insufferable pride is the also the source of one of their saving graces-a finely-honed sense of nobility. Secure in the knowledge that they are superior, minotaurs have developed a strong sense of correct (not right or wrong) behavior that only the truly superior can afford. They remember their debts and obligations and understand perfectly their status in society. They feel little challenge to their position from other races and so can tolerate and even elevate others to high rank with only a touch of condescension.

Although cunning and clever, minotaurs are trustworthy to those who have earned their respect. At the same time, they are masters at feigning interest and loyalty to those they are forced to follow but hold in low regard. Indeed, they are more devious and dangerous to their own kind, where the whims of fate can sometimes overturn the proper order of things, than to the members of other races, who only gain respect by earning it. The Emperor of the League may be a weakling, but until he is challenged he is still the Emperor and must be given a show of respect. A brave human warrior, on the other hand, has first to prove himself.

Minotaurs are scrupulously and cold-bloodedly just (although they are as susceptible to corruption as anyone else). By nature, minotaurs are a physical people, less interested in the pursuits of the mind than those of the sword. Still, they are not so foolish as to neglect the awesome powers of magic, although it is somewhat more difficult for them to master.

Minotaurs of Taladas are commonly fighters and, somewhat less frequent, are rangers, wizards, and priests. Rarest of all are the minotaur paladins, champions who do more than just fight cases, but who have taken up the cause of justice and fight only for cause of right and good.

Taladan minotaurs gain a + 1 bonus to all surprise rolls, a product of their natural cunning and sharp senses. They have infravision to a range of 60 feet. They are immune to *maze* spells and have direction sense (1-4 on 1d6).

Unlike their brutish cousins in Ansalon, Taladan minotaurs are slightly less tough and more personable. Their ability scores are adjusted with a + 1 bonus for Strength and Charisma and a -1 penalty for Wisdom and Intelligence.

Ogres

Ogres are the second of Camoen of Kristophan's "ill-favored races" (the third and fourth being the hobgoblins and yaggol). They are a hulking and withdrawn race, near-giants who go to great efforts to keep to themselves. Stronger than even the mighty minotaurs and more dull-witted than goblins, ogres are little more than muscle- bound, ill-tempered brutes.

Standing over nine feet in height, ogres are ugly by everyone's standards but their own. Their skins are warty and blotched with ugly marks. Hair sparsely grows on their scalp in long, generally greasy locks. The nails of their toes are long, almost like talons, and are perpetually cracked and filthy.

Ogres have very limited understandings of things, particularly magic and faith. Indeed, hunting and fighting are the only things they are noticeably skilled at. Thus, ogres can be only fighters, although they can rise to high levels in that class.

Ogres, because of their sheer size and mass, gain a + 2 bonus to all damage rolls, in addition to all modifications for Strength and Dexterity. They have infravision to 60 feet and a movement rating

Racial Ability Requirements for New Races*

Ability	Bakali	Gnomoi	Goblin	Minotaur	Ogre
Strength	7/18	6/18	3/17	8/18	10/18
Dexterity	3/18	3/18	5/18	3/18	3/15
Constitution	8/18	8/18	3/18	8/18	3/15
Intelligence	3/17	6/18	3/18	6/18	3/12
Wisdom	3/17	3/18	3/17	3/18	3/14
Charisma	3/15	3/18	3/16	3/18	3/16

* The format is minimum/maximum.

Racial Class and Level Limits for Taladas

	Class							
Race	Bd	Pr	Ftr	Mage	Pal	Rng	Th	Ti
Bakali	—	7	12	–	–	—	—	—
Dwarf, Finawar	7	5	15	—	—	—	12	—
Dwarf, Scorned	12	—	15	—	—	9	12	—
Elf, Cha'asii	10	—	12	15	—	9	6	—
Elf, Clan (Elf/H-Elf)	9	13	15	—	12	9	—	
Elf, Hulderfolk	8	—	10	15	—	—	12	—
Gnomoi	—	9	11	15	—	—	13	U
Goblin	—	6	9	—	—	7	15	—
Human	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	—
Kender	4	12	5	—	—	5	15	—
Kender, Marak	—	6	10	—	—	5	15	—
Minoi	—	—	6	—	—	—	5	–
Minotaur	—	10	16	12	9	3	–	–
Ogre	—	—	16	—	—	—	–	–

of 9. They can handle large weapons easily with a single hand.

Typically strong and hearty, ogre player characters gain a + 2 bonus to their Strength and Constitution ability scores. Equally renowned for their dull wits and clumsiness, ogres suffer a **-2** penalty to Intelligence and a -1 penalty to Wisdom and Dexterity.

Racial Adjustments for New Races

Race	Adjustment
Bakali	+1 Str, +1 Con, -1 Int, -1 Cha
Gnomoi	+ 1 Int, -1 Wis
Goblin	+ 1 Dex, -1 Str
Minotaur	+ 1 Str, + 1 Cha, -1 Wis, -1 Int
Ogre	+2 Str, +2 Con, -2 Int, -1 Wis, -1 Dex

CHARACTER CLASSES

For players familiar with the world and characters of Krynn, not every character type is found upon the continent of Taladas. Some are unique to Ansalon, particularly those described in the *DRAGONLANCE® Adventures* book. The place (if any) of each character class from that book and the *Player's Handbook* is summarized below.

Fighters: Except for the attitudes held by different cultures, this class is unchanged. Indeed, given the wild and warlike nature of the people, fighters are quite common.

Rangers: Rangers do appear, though not in the numbers found among the people of Ansalon. Dwarves, long separated from the stock of Ansalon, have never developed the skills needed to be rangers. Elves also find themselves limited in this regard.

Paladins: Since the Flight of the Gods, paladins are few and far between. For centuries, the few that appeared were followers of Mislaxa. Now, with the gradual return of other gods, there are a few paladins of the other good gods.

Knights of Solamnia: Except for those rare individuals who crossed the oceans from Ansalon to Taladas, there are no Knights among the people of the land.

Wizards: Virtually all wizards, whether mages or specialists, are renegades by the standards of Ansalon. Although Taladas is bound by the phases of the three moons, its more primitive state has prevented the adoption of the conventions or restrictions represented by the Towers of High Sorcery in Ansalon.

This does not mean that Taladan wizards can do however they please. Each wizard, whether a mage or specialist, must choose one of the moons to guide his path. Each choice has ethical restrictions and consequences and is aligned to one of the three gods of alignment—good, neutrality, or evil.

The moon of good (Solinari in Ansalon) is known as Solais to the people of the League, but has other names to different people throughout the world—Soranus, Amekht-Mul, Ilman-Solri, and Sokilrandimiquarthol (in the language of the gnomes). From it is believed to come the powers of the good wizards (whether they be lawful, neutral, or chaotic).

Lunais (the goddess Lunitari in Ansalon) is the aspect of neutrality, as she is known in the League. In the other lands she is Yergas the Goddess of Night, Luita, or Anasjovheerthol. She is the dispenser of magical skill and might to the wizards of neutrality.

Finally, there is Angomais (Nuitari in Ansalon), the evil god of the Dark Moon. His names are few in Taladas-Neith, Malkari, and Kaasromermagasthol—and spoken only in secret whispers. He is the master and fountainhead for those wizards of evil and dark sorceries.

Although the wizards are not divided into the orders of Ansalon, each is affected, upon attaining 4th level, by the

phases of his chosen moon. The phase and alignment of the moon can increase or decrease the potency of a wizard's magic. The effects of the different moons, according to their phases and positions, are showed by the Moon Phase Effects and Moon Alignment Effects Tables. These are reprinted from the *DRAGONLANCE® Adventures* rule book for your convenience. (High and Low Sanction are not used in Taladas to identify full and new moons.)

Moon Phase Effects Table

Moon Phase	Saving Throw	Add. Spells	Effective Level	
New moon	-1	0	-1	
Waxing	0	+1	0	
Full	+1	+2	+1	*
Waning	0	0	0	

* This benefit is gained only by wizards of 6th level or greater who also have an Intelligence of 15 or more.

Moon Alignment Effects Table

Alignment	Saving Throw	Add. Spells	Effective
S with L	+1	+1	+1
L with A	+1	+1	+1
S with A	+1	0	0
All Three	+2	+2	+1

S = Solais (Solinari), L = Lunais (Lunitari), A = Angomais (Nuitari)

The saving throw category lists the modifier applied to all saving throws rolled by the affected wizard. It has no effect on the saving throws of spells cast by the wizard.

Additional spells gained by the wizard can be selected from any level of spell the wizard is allowed to cast.

The effective level modifier increases the affected wizard's level only for those spells he already knows. This applies to number of spells, range, and effect. It does not allow the character to cast spells he does not know (because he has not attained the appropriate level through earned experience). Thus, a 6th-level wizard who gained a bonus level would not be able to cast a 4th-level spell (as a 7th-level wizard would) because he has not yet learned any 4th-level spells and written them in his spell book.

The benefits of various lunar alignments affect only those wizards who follow the given moons. Thus, when Solais and Lunais align, the beneficial effects are felt only by good and neutral wizards. The effects of the lunar phase and alignment are cumulative. If Solais and Lunais align and Lunais happens to be full, the neutral wizard would gain a + 2 bonus to saving throws and level and a + 3 to additional spells, while the good wizard would gain a + 1 bonus to all three categories.

Determining Lunar Position and Alignment: The relationship of the three moons of Krynn is important to the powers of all wizards in your game; therefore it is necessary for you to track the periods of each on the Lunar Display Wheel (Note: This wheel replaces the Moon Tracking Chart found in the *DRAGONLANCE® Adventures* rule book for purposes of adventures in Taladas.) As you track them, you can record the important information on the Lunar Cycle Record Sheet.

To determine the position for each moon, roll 1d8 and place a marker on that space of the appropriate track. This is the beginning position for that moon. Lunais uses the innermost track, Angomais has the middle track, while Solais occupies the outer track. After locating the starting position for each moon, you can either keep the display set up where you can see it during play or you can record the lunar cycles in advance on the Lunar Cycle Record Sheet. To do the latter, note the appropriate information for alignments and phases in the spaces on the form. Set up the Lunar Display Wheel, record the information for that day, then advance the tracks one day and note the new information. Do this until you have sufficient information for the planned adventure.

On the form, each moon has a separate line and is divided into columns. The date can be written in the space at the top of the column. For each day and each moon, you must note its phase and any alignment. When the moon is waxing, put a + in the appropriate space. If the moon is waning, put a - (minus sign) in the space. If the moon is full, write a capital S, L, or A. If it is a new moon, leave the space blank. To note the alignments of the different moons, circle the symbols (or absence of them) for those moons in conjunction. The different moons are considered to be in conjunction if a line drawn from the center of the wheel passes through the spaces they both occupy.

If it has been some time since you last played (or if the characters have rested a long, undetermined amount of time between adventures), it is not necessary for you to calculate the exact position of each moon since the last adventure. You can simply reset the Lunar Display Wheel by randomly determining the position of the moons once again.

Priests: All clerics of Taladas must follow 'one (and only one) of the gods of Krynn; however, which is the true god (or goddess) and who are the true priests is a very confused and acrimonious subject. Prior to the Flight of the Gods, priests had open and obvious proofs of the strength of their faith and their worth to the deities. This all changed when the gods left Krynn. Suddenly, anyone could claim to be a "pipeline to the truth" and there was no proof that they were not what they claimed. Men (and others) of little faith but much ambition and charisma became priests, preaching the tenets of a god, often twisted and manipulated to their own ends.

Ever since the Flight, the gods have been slowly returning to Taladas. Some have been dismayed and disgusted by the actions taken in their name. Other gods have been pleased and delighted, particularly those that revel in evil and chaos. To right these wrongs, the good gods in particular will bestow powers upon those souls who are deserving by their piety and faith. Often this is can be quite a surprise to the person summoned to the calling!

Taladan priests, with their spheres of spells and granted powers, are described in the Character Kit section (starting on page 8. In addition, there are a few clerics

belonging to the Holy Order of the Stars from Ansalon. While these priests are few and far between, they are most often found (when found at all) among the cities of the Minotaur League.

Thieves: No matter how good their intentions, it seems that all societies manage to produce fellows of less-than-honest intent. Thieves are found everywhere, but not always with the same range of abilities and skills. Sample thieves are described in the Character Kits.

Thieves are not all robbers and scoundrels however. This is particularly true among the nomadic clans. Among the horsemen in particular, they take on the roles of scouts and spies. Although they have the full range of thieving abilities, they place greater importance on stealth and observation than on pick-pocketing and robbery. Sample scouts are described in the Character Kits.

Bards: Bards, whether they are singers, musicians, poets, or story- tellers, are found in almost every culture, except for the most dull-witted and brutish.

Player Character Kits

One feature of Taladas is the wide variety of different customs, beliefs, and attitudes of the people. Role-playing these characters should be part of the newness and excitement for your players. The player whose character is a Uigan fighter has a more interesting character than just a fighter. The character who is a fighter/mage jungle elf is much more than an ordinary fighter/mage.

Because of the nature of the game, player character classes alone are not suited to modeling different cultures. A Uigan fighter is different from a minotaur champion, but both are still basically fighters. However, the skills, attitudes, choice of weapons, and even fighting styles of the two may be very different. To make these differences clear, DMs and players are strongly urged to use the Character Kits that follow.

The Character Kits are not new character classes. At the core of each, the character is still basically a fighter, wizard, thief or whatever. However, the kits allow characters, identical in class but from different cultures, to have special abilities and knowledge appropriate to their background. Thus, characters from the Uigan people are assumed to be skilled riders, while those of the Payan Mako can handle small boats. The Uigan would favor the short bow and lance; the Payan Mako the spear and club. These are only some of the minor differences that distinguish background. More significant abilities are also possible.

Just as characters of particular lands may gain certain advantages, they may also acquire disadvantages. These may be as simple as prejudices or can be more complicated restrictions. Elf Clan warriors find it difficult to control their savagery, which is both a blessing and a curse. Glass Sailors found outside their lands are outcasts from their people. The Scorned Dwarves suffer in the bright open spaces of the surface world.

In the pages that follow, the more common character types of the different lands are presented as completely prepared kits. Each is given on a half page as a ready-to-use character sheet. You can photocopy those sheets that you need for personal use. Not every possible combination of character class is given and certainly others are possible, within the limits of race and ability. However, to get the full effect of role-playing in Taladas, it is strongly recommended that you use these kits when creating characters from the new continent.

Each kit provides space to note your character's ability scores, saving throws, and proficiencies. In addition, each kit lists the special rules needed to model the culture. Finally, there is a brief description of the appearance and attitudes of the people of that culture.

Each character type is laid out on half of a player character record sheet. Placing a sheet of paper below the entry for the kit allows you to photocopy a complete page (with a suitable blank area beneath the kit). You may photocopy for personal use only, however.



Character__________ Player__________

Uigan Fighter

Race: Human **Sex: Male** **Homeland: Tamire**

ABILITIES

STR	Hit Prob	Dmg Adj	Wgt Allow	Max Press	Op Drs	B B/ LG
DEX	Rctn Adj		Missile Att Adj		Def Adj	
CON	Adj	Sys Shk	Res Sur	Pois Save	Regen	
INT	No of Lang	Spell Lvl	Lrn Sp	Spells/ Level	Spell Immun	
WIS	Mag Def Adjus	Bonus Spells	Spell Fall	Spell Immun		
CHR	Max No Hench	Loy Base	Rctn Adj			

Uigan warriors are accomplished horsemen, relying on speed and the striking power of their bows instead of the protection of armor and the might of the sword. Uigan fighters must have a Strength of 9 or better and a Dexterity of 8 or better. Height is 60 + 1d10 inches.

All Uigan fighters have tattooed cheeks and foreheads. Traditionally they shave their heads, except for a single lock on the left side. Tribal clothing includes woolen tunics, pantaloons, and pointed cap.

A Uigan fighter begins with the following equipment: padded armor, composite short bow, quiver of arrows, knife, and horse and saddle.

Starting cash is limited to 1d6 worth of steel pieces.

Each Uigan is associated with a particular family. Unless he has committed a crime, he can live with his family and so have his daily needs-food, lodging and clothing-taken care of.

A Uigan warrior cannot initially choose the following proficiencies: agriculture, carpentry, mining, seamanship, stonemasonry, reading/writing, forgery, charioteering, or mountaineering.

Level______

Alignment______

MOVEMENT

Base Rate

HIT POINTS

ARMOR

AC ____ Modifier

SAVING THROWS

____ Paralyze/ Poison ○

____ Rod, Staff, or Wand ○

____ Petrify/ Polymorph ○

____ Breath Weapon ○

____ Spells ○

Proficiencies/Skills/Languages

Animal Handling	(-1/Wis)		(/)
Direction Sense	(+1/Wis)		(/)
Riding, Horse	(+3/Wis)		(/)
Uigan	(0/Int)		(/)
Weather Sense	(-1/Wis)		(/)
	(/)		(/)
	(/)		(/)
	(/)		(/)

Character__________ Player__________

Uigan Jijin Priestess

Race: Human **Sex: Female** **Homeland: Tamire**

ABILITIES

STR	Hit Prob	Dmg Adj	Wgt Allow	Max Press	Op Drs	BB/ LG
DEX	Rctn Adj		Missile Att Adj		Def Adj	
CON	HP Adj	Sys Shk	Res Sur	Pois Save	Regen	
INT	No of Lang	Spell Lvl	Lrn Sp	Spells/ Level	Spell Immun	
WIS	Mag Def Adjus	Bonus Spells	Spell Fail	Spell Immun		
CHR	Max No. Hench	Loy Base	Rctn Adj			

The clerics of Jijin (Chislev) are all female. By tradition, they wear white robes and caps. The caps are topped with black horse-tail plumes. The average height of these priestesses is 60′ + 1d6 inches.

True priestesses (with spell powers) are rare. Characters must have a Wisdom of 12 or greater. Those who qualify must be neutral good to receive the blessing of Jijin.

Priestesses of Jijin receive the granted power of animal empathy from their goddess. This is identical to the ranger's power as explained in the 2nd Edition rules. In addition, all priestesses are skilled riders, gaining a further + 2 bonus to all riding proficiency checks. Priestesses of Jijin have major access to the following spheres: All, Animal, Summoning, and Weather. They have minor access to the Divination and Plant spheres. The priestesses are not warlike and are limited to leather armor. They can use staffs, clubs, short bows, knives, daggers, and lances.

Priestess cannot initially choose the following proficiencies: carpentry, mining, seamanship, engineering, charioteering, and mountaineering.

Level______

Alignment______

MOVEMENT

Base Rate

HIT POINTS

ARMOR

AC ____ Modifier

SAVING THROWS

____ Paralyze/ Poison ○

____ Rod, Staff, or Wand ○

____ Petrify/ Polymorph ○

____ Breath Weapon ○

____ Spells ○

Proficiencies/Skills/Languages

Animal Handling	(-1/Wis)		(/)
Dancing	(0/Dex)		(/)
Elf, Tamire	(0/Int)		(/)
Herbalism	(-2/Int)		(/)
Local History	(0/Cha)		(/)
Religion, Jijin	(0/Wis)		(/)
Riding, Horse	(+3/Wis)		(/)
Singing	(0/Cha)		(/)
Uigan	(0/Int)		(/)

Character ____________ Player ____________

Level ________

Alignment ________

SAVING THROWS

Uigan Qu'uan Priest

Race: Human **Sex: Male** **Homeland: Tamire**

MOVEMENT

Base Rate

HIT POINTS

ARMOR

Save		
______	Paralyze/ Poison	○
______	Rod,Staff, or Wand	○
______	Petrify/ Polymorph	○
______	Breath Weapon	○
Modifier	Spells	○

ABILITIES

STR	Hit Prob	Dmg Adj	wgt Allow	Max Press	Op Drs	BB/ LG	
DEX	Rctn Adj	Missile Att Adj	Def Adj				
CON	HP Adj	Sys Shk	Res Sur	Pois Save	Regen		
INT	No of Lang	Spell Lv1	Lrn Sp	Spells/ Level	Spell Immun		
WIS	Mag Def Adjus	Bonus Spells	Spell Fail	Spell Immun			
CHR	Max No Hench	Loy Base	Rctn Adj				

Qu'uan priests are all followers of Qu'uan the Warrior (Kiri-Jolith) who, like the other gods, has only recently returned powers to his faithful. Qu'uan priests must be both strong (9 Strength minimum) and wise (9 Wisdom minimum). The priests must be good in alignment. Unlike other warriors of the Uigan, the priests do not shave their heads. They wear heavily quilted robes, equivalent of padded armor. They stand 60 + 1d10 inches in height.

Qu'uan priests receive the granted power to bless weapons. The ritual takes an entire night and when done, gives the weapon the properties of a + 1 weapon for both attack and damage rolls. The blessing lasts until sundown of the next day. One weapon (or five arrows) can be blessed for every level of the priest.

Qu'uan priests have major access to the All, Combat, Divination, Guardian, and Protection spheres. They have minor access to the Creation sphere. They may use only leather armor but can wield any weapon.

The priests cannot initially choose from the following proficiencies: carpentry, mining, seamanship, stonemasonry, charioteering, or mountaineering. Qu'uan priests can choose proficiencies from the General, Priest, and Warrior groups at no penalty.

Proficiencies/Skills/Languages

Astrology	(0/Int)	______	(/)
Lance	(/)	______	(/)
Local History	(0/Cha)	______	(/)
Religion, Qu'uan	(0/Wis)	______	(/)
Riding, Horse	(+3/Wis)	______	(/)
Short Bow	(/)	______	(/)
Uigan	(O/Wis)	______	(/)
______	(/)	______	(/)

Character ____________ Player ____________

Level ________

Alignment ________

SAVING THROWS

Elf Clan Fighter or Ranger

Race: Elf or Half-elf **Sex: Male or Female**

Clan: ________ **Homeland: Tamire**

MOVEMENT

Base Rate

HIT POINTS

ARMOR

AC

Save		
______	Paralyze/ Poison	○
______	Rod, Staff, or Wand	○
______	Petrify/ Polymorph	○
______	Breath Weapon	○
Modifier	Spells	○

ABILITIES

STR	Hit Prob	Dmg Adj	Wgt Allow	Max Press	Op Drs	BB/ LG	
DEX	Rctn Adj	Missile Att Adj	Def Adj				
CON	HP Adj	Sys Shk	Res Sur	Pois Save	Regen		
INT	No of Lang	Spell Lv1	Lrn Sp	Spells/ Level	Spell Immun		
WIS	Mag Def Adjus	Bonus Spells	Spell Fail	Spell Immun			
CHR	Max No Hench	Loy Base	Rctn Adj				

Warriors of the Elf Clans are a wild and dangerous group. The warriors are expert horsemen, even better than the Uigan. Like their neighbors, they are skilled with the bow and lance. In addition to the normal elven or half-elven requirements, Elf Clan fighters must have a Constitution of 9 or better. Elf warriors are 60 + 1d6 (males) or 1d4 (females) inches in height. Warriors do not have any starting money.

Elf clan warriors (of all types) can attempt to enter a trance-like state of berserk frenzy, the sa'qul idre. The character can attempt to enter this by spending an hour in preparation, then rolling a successful saving throw vs. death. If connected to an emotional event, the check is modified by a + 2 bonus. The frenzy lasts for 1d3 hours. During this time the elf gains a + 2 bonus to attack and damage rolls. However, during this time, all non-elf (or half-elves) will be attacked, even if known to the character. At the end of the frenzy, the elf loses 1d4 hit points from exhaustion.

Elf warriors cannot initially chose from the following proficiencies: agriculture, mining, stonemasonry, reading/writing, forgery, charioteering, mountaineering, and gem cutting. They gain an additional + 1 bonus to all riding checks.

Proficiencies/Skills/Languages

Animal Handling	(-1/Wis)	______	(/)
Elvish, Tamire	(0/Int)	______	(/)
Riding, Horse	(+4/Wis)	______	(/)
Uigan	(0/Int)	______	(/)
______	(/)	______	(/)
______	(/)	______	(/)
______	(/)	______	(/)
______	(/)	______	(/)
______	(/)	______	(/)

Character ____________________ Player ________________

Level __________

Alignment __________

Elf Clan Wizardress

Race: Elf or Half-Elf **Sex: Female or Male**
Clan: __________ **Homeland: Tamire**

ABILITIES

	STR	Hit Prob	Dmg Adj	Wgt Allow	Max Press	Op Drs	BB/ LG
	DEX	Rctn Adj		Missile Att Adj		Def Adj	
	CON	HP Adj	Sys Shk	Res Sur	Pois Save	Regen	
	INT	No of Lang	Spell Lvl	Lrn Sp	Spells/ Level	Spell Immun	
	WIS	Mag Def Adjus	Bonus Spells	Spell Fail	Spell Immun		
	CHR	Max No Hench	Loy Base	Rctn Adj			

MOVEMENT

Base Rate

HIT POINTS

ARMOR

AC

SAVING THROWS

______	Paralyze/ Poison	○
______	Rod,Staff, or Wand	○
______	Petrify/ Polymorph	○
______	Breath Weapon	○
Modifier	Spells	○

Proficiencies/Skills/Languages

Ancient History	(-1/Int)	______	(/)
Dancing	(0/Dex)	______	(/)
Elf, Tamire	(0/Int)	______	(/)
Elf, Ancient	(0/Int)	______	(/)
Goblin, Ilquar	(0/Int)	______	(/)
Singing	(0/Cha)	______	(/)
Spellcraft	(-2/Int)	______	(/)
Uigan	(O/Int)	______	(/)

The wizardresses of the Elf Clans are almost entirely female, although there are a few rare males (who are treated as females in all respects, including title). Their only distinction from the warriors of the clan is that they do not wear the arms and armor of warriors. They stand 60 + 1d6 (male) or 1d4 (female) inches in height.

Wizardresses are invariably specialists, particularly in the fields of transmutation and enchantment. Transmuters must have at least a 15 Dexterity, while enchanters require a 16 Charisma. Each wizardress is trained communally by the others of the clan. Thus, no wizardress has a single mentor.

Character ____________________ Player ________________

Level __________

Alignment __________

Elf Clan Shaman

Race: Elf **Sex: Male**
Clan: __________ **Homeland: Tamire**

ABILITIES

	STR	Hit Prob	Dmg Adj	Wgt Allow	Max Press	Op Drs	BB/ LG
	DEX	Rctn Adj		Missile Att Adj		Def Adj	
	CON	Adj	Sys Shk	Res Sur	Pois Save	Regen	
	INT	No of Lang	Spell Lvl	Lrn Sp	Spells/ Level	Spell Immun	
	WIS	Mag Def Adjus	Bonus Spells	Spell Fail	Spell Immun		
	CHR	Max No Hench	Loy Base	Rctn Adj			

MOVEMENT

Base Rate

HIT POINTS

ARMOR

AC

SAVING THROWS

______	Paralyze / Poison	○
______	Rod,Staff, or Wand	○
______	Petrify / Polymorph	○
______	Breath Weapon	○
Modifier	Spells	○

Proficiencies/Skills/Languages

Ancient History	(-1/Int)	______	(/)
Animal Lore	(0/Int)	______	(/)
Elf, Tamire	(0/Int)	______	(/)
Elf, Ancient	(0/Int)	______	(/)
Goblin, Ilquar	(0/Int)	______	(/)
Local History	(0/Cha)	______	(/)
Singing	(0/Cha)	______	(/)
Uigan	(0/Int)	______	(/)
______	(/)	______	(/)

Elf clan shamans are followers of various animal spirits, known as quoyai. Each shaman has a particular animal or creature revered as its spirit guide, seen in a vision. This need not be the same as the clan totem.

Becoming a shaman requires stamina as well as faith, so all shamans must have Wisdoms and Constitutions of 12 or better. Shamans must abide by exacting taboos. Each player should create (subject to the DM's approval) an appropriate taboo for his character. Choice of dress, speech, food, or limits on behavior are all suitable.

Shamans can wear leather or padded armor and can wield lances, clubs, and daggers. They have major access to the following spheres: All, Animal, Charm, Divination, Healing, and Plant. They have minor access to the spheres of Combat and Protection. The granted power of a shaman enables him to assume the form of his spirit guide at will. Each use of the power causes 1d6 points of damage due to the strain. Furthermore, the shaman can project himself astrally once per week.

Character ____________ Player ____________

Level ________

Alignment ________

Goblin Fighter/Thief

Race: Goblin **Sex: Male**
Homeland: Ilquar Mountains **Village:** ________

ABILITIES

	STR	Hit Prob	Dmg Adj	Wgt Allow	Max Press	Op Drs	B B/ LG
	DEX	Rctn Adj		Missile Att Adj		Def Adj	
	CON	HP Adj	Sys Shk	Res Sur	Pois Save	Regen	
	INT	No of Lang	Spell Lvl	Lrn Sp	Spells/ Level	Spell Immun	
	WIS	Mag Def Adjus	Bonus Spells	Spell Fail	Spell Immun		
	CHR	Max No Hench		Loy Base		Rctn Adj	

MOVEMENT ____ Base Rate

HIT POINTS

ARMOR

AC

SAVING THROWS

____	Paralyze / Poison	○
____	Rod, Staff, or Wand	○
____	Petrify/ Polymorph	○
____	Breath Weapon	○
____ Modifier	Spells	○

Short, squat and ugly, the Ilquar goblins are nonetheless intelligent and clever. Nearly all are fighters and many also tend to thievery. To be a fighter/ thief, the character must have a 9 or better in Strength and Dexterity.

Ilquar thieves are limited in their experience. Initially, characters have no ability to open locks or find and remove traps. The other skills can be learned once the character broadens his range of knowledge. They are clumsy climbers **(-10%** initial adjustment) but good at moving silently (+5%) and hiding in shadows (+5%).

Proficiencies/Skills/Languages

Animal Lore	(0/Int)	________	(/)
Blind-fighting	(–/–)	________	(/)
Goblin, Ilquar	(0/Int)	________	(/)
Hunting	(-1/Wis)	________	(/)
Mining	(-3/Wis)	________	(/)
Set Snares	(-1/Dex)	________	(/)
Stonemasonry	(-2/Str)	________	(/)
Tracking	(0/Wis)	________	(/)

Character ____________ Player ____________

Level ________

Alignment ________

Goblin Shaman

Race: Goblin **Sex: Male** **Homeland: Ilquar Mountains**

ABILITIES

	STR	Hit Prob	Dmg Adj	wgt Allow	Max Press	Op Drs	B B/ LG
	DEX	Rctn Adj		Missile Att Adj		Def Adj	
	CON	HP Adj	Sys Shk	Res Sur	Pois Save	Regen	
	INT	No of Lang	Spell Lvl	Lrn Sp	Spells/ Level	Spell Immun	
	WIS	Mag Def Adjus	Bonus Spells	Spell Fail	Spell Immun		
	CHR	Max No Hench		Loy Base		Rctn Adj	

MOVEMENT ____ Base Rate

HIT POINTS

ARMOR

AC

SAVING THROWS

____	Paralyze/ Poison	○
____	Rod, Staff, or Wand	○
____	Petrify/ Polymorph	○
____	Breath Weapon	○
____ Modifier	Spells	○

The shamans of the Ilquar Mountains are chosen from the weaklings of the tribes, raised by the females and taught the secrets of Hiteh. As such, goblin shamans must have a Wisdom of 9 or greater and cannot have a Strength or Constitution greater than 12.

Goblin shamans can wear any type of armor and use any nonmissile weapon. They have major access to the following spheres: All, Combat, Necromantic, and Protection. They have minor access to Divination and Summoning. They also have minor access to Healing spells, but these are castable only on followers of their faith.

Goblin shamans gain the granted power of ***spook*** up to five times per day. This functions identically to the 1st-level wizard spell of the same name.

Proficiencies/Skills/Languages

Agriculture	(0/Int)	________	(/)
Alan-Atu	(0/Int)	________	(/)
Astrology	(0/Int)	________	(/)
Cooking	(0/Int)	________	(/)
Elf, Tamire	(0/Int)	________	(/)
Goblin, Ilquar	(0/Int)	________	(/)
Religion	(0/Wis)	________	(/)
Spellcraft	(-2/Int)	________	(/)

Character ________ Player ________

Level ________

SAVING THROWS

Alignment ________

Alan-Atu Warrior

Class: Fighter or Ranger
Sex: Male or Female

Race: Human
Homeland: Western Ilquars

MOVEMENT

Base Rate

HIT POINTS

ARMOR

AC

Modifier

Paralyze/ Poison

Rod, Staff, or Wand

Petrify / Polymorph

Breath Weapon

Spells

ABILITIES

	STR	Hit Prob	Dmg Adj	wgt Allow	Max Press	Op DB	B B/ LG
	DEX	Rctn Adj		Missile Att Adj		Def Adj	
	CON	H P Adj	Sys Shk	Res Sur	Pois Save	Regen	
	INT	No of Lang	Spell Lvl	Lrn Sp	Spells/ Level	Spell Immun	
	WIS	Mag Def Adjus	Bonus Spells	Spell Fail	Spell Immun		
	CHR	Max No Hench	Loy Base	Rctn Adj			

The Alan-Atu are a tough, hardy folk, the warriors even more so. All Alan-Atu warriors thus gain a + 1 bonus to Constitution. A high proportion are also rangers.

They are naturally suspicious and fatalistic, and most find it hard to disguise their basic distrust of strangers. This is easily noted by others, giving the player character a -3 penalty to all NPC reaction rolls.

Alan-Atu warriors begin play with a suit of leather armor, medium shield (possibly adorned with trophies), and a shildor (Wgt 8, Sz M, Type S, Speed Factor 6, Dmg 2-4 vs. medium or 1d8 vs. large).

Proficiencies/Skills/Languages

Alan-Atu	(0/Int)		(/)
Animal Handling	(-1/Wis)		(/)
Fishing	(-1/Wis)		(/)
Goblin, Ilquar	(0/Int)		(/)
Herbalism	(-2/Int)		(/)
Survival, Mountain	(0/Int)		(/)
Tracking	(0/Wis)		(/)

Character ________ Player ________

Level ________

SAVING THROWS

Alignment ________

Alan-Atu Bard

Class: Bard
Sex: Male or Female

Race: Human
Homeland: Western Ilquars

MOVEMENT

Base Rate

ARMOR

AC

Modifier

Paralyze/ Poison

Rod, Staff, or Wand

Petrify/ Polymorph

Breath Weapon

Spells

ABILITIES

	STR	Hit Prob	Dmg Adj	wgt Allow	Max Press	Op Drs	B B/ LG
	DEX	Rctn Adj		Missile Att Adj		Def Adj	
	CON	H P Adj	Sys Shk	Res Sur	Pois Save	Regen	
	INT	No of Lang	Spell Lvl	Lrn Sp	Spells/ Level	Spell Immun	
	WIS	Mag Def Adjus	Bonus Spells	Spell Fail	Spell Immun		
	CHR	Max No Hench	Loy Base	Rctn Adj			

The bards of the Alan-Atu are more than just entertainers. The bards serve the mountain shepherds as advisors, filling the role normally occupied by priests. Because of this, Alan-Atu bards must have a Wisdom of 12 or greater, in addition to the other bard prerequisites.

Alan-Atu bards learn the songs of their people, sung to the accompaniment of the drum. Although not specialists in magic, they can learn only those spells from the schools of abjuration, enchantment/charm, greater divination, and illusion /phantasm. With these they advise chieftains and entertain merrymakers.

Compared to normal Alan-Atu, bards deal more with outsiders, so they have no reaction penalty when dealing with strangers. Like warriors, they begin play with a medium shield, leather armor, and shildor.

Proficiencies/Skills/Languages

Alan-Atu	(0/Int)	Singing	(0/Cha)
Ancient History	(-1/Int)	Uigan	(0/Int)
Artistic Ability	(0/Wis)		(/)
Dancing	(0/Dex)		(/)
Elf, Tamire	(0/Int)		(/)
Etiquette	(0/Cha)		(/)
Goblin, Ilquar	(0/Int)		(/)
Heraldry, Alan-Atu	(0/Int)		(/)
Local History	(0/Cha)		(/)

Character ______________ Player ______________

Level ________

Alignment ________

SAVING THROWS

______	Paralyze/ Poison	○
______	Rod, Staff, or Wand	○
______	Petrify/ Polymorph	○
______	Breath Weapon	○
______ Modifier	Spells	○

MOVEMENT

Base Rate

HIT POINTS

ARMOR

AC

Ice People Warrior

Class: Fighter or Ranger **Race: Human**
Sex: Male **Homeland: Upper Panak Desert**

ABILITIES

	STR	Hit Prob	Dmg Adj	Wgt Allow	Max Press	Op Drs	B B/ LG
	DEX	Rctn Adj	Missile Att Adj	Def Adj			
	CON	HP Adj	SYS Shk	Res Sur	Pois Save	Regen	
	INT	No of Lang	Spell Lvl	Lrn Sp	Spells/ Level	Spell Immun	
	WIS	Mag Def Adjus	Bonus Spells	Spell Fail	Spell Immun		
	CHR	Max No Hench	Loy Base	Rctn Adj			

The Ice People are a nation of primitive warriors who live in the frozen wastes of the Upper Panak, moving north and south with the seasons. Ice People warriors are most commonly fighters, but a few excel at hunting to become rangers. All Ice People warriors gain a + 1 bonus to Constitution.

Living in a land of ice and snow, Ice People warriors are proficient at navigation, gaining a bonus of 1 to all navigation checks. Every warrior begins play with a harpoon, handaxe, and compound short bow.

Initially no warrior can choose the read/write proficiency. None of the Ice People can choose the agriculture proficiency. Those who select proficiencies dealing with animals are limited to dogs and nasif (reindeer).

Proficiencies/Skills/Languages

Animal Handling	(-1/Wis)	______	(/)
Direction Sense	(+1/Wis)	______	(/)
Fishing	(-1/Wis)	______	(/)
Hunting	(-1/Wis)	______	(/)
Navigation	(-2/Int)	______	(/)
Panak	(0/Int)	______	(/)
Sledge Handling	(+ 2/Dex)	______	(/)
Survival, Arctic	(0/Int)	______	(/)

Character ______________ Player ______________

Level ________

Alignment ________

SAVING THROWS

______	Paralyze/ Poison	○
______	Rod, Staff, or Wand	○
______	Petrify/ Polymorph	○
______	Breath Weapon	○
______ Modifier	Spells	○

MOVEMENT

Base Rate

HIT POINTS

ARMOR

AC

Makou

Class: Wizard **Race: Human**
Sex: Male or Female **Homeland: Upper Panak Desert**

ABILITIES

	STR	Hit Prob	Dmg Adj	Wgt Allow	Max Press	Op Drs	B B/ LG
	DEX	Rctn Adj	Missile Att Adj	Def Adj			
	CON	H P Adj	Sys Shk	Res Sur	Pois Save	Regen	
	INT	No of Lang	Spell Lvl	Lrn Sp	Spells/ Level	Spell Immun	
	WIS	Mag Def Adjus	Bonus Spells	Spell Fail	Spell Immun		
	CHR	Max No Hench	Loy Base	Rctn Adj			

Among the Ice People of the far north, the makou are important advisors and defenders of the tribe. Although wizards, the makou act as tribal shamans and have borrowed many of the rituals of the old tribal shamans, who were driven out long ago. With their limited ability, they act as healers and seers for the community.

Unlike other wizards, makou can use spears, although they are still restricted in armor selection. They cannot be specialists and must add 2 to the casting time of all spells, since their shamanistic trappings have added many unnecessary steps to the casting process.

Makou cannot initially learn agriculture, blacksmithing, mining, or herbalism proficiencies.

Proficiencies/Skills/Languages

Ancient History	(-1/Int)	______	(/)
Auric	(0/Int)	______	(/)
Fishing	(-1/Wis)	______	(/)
Panak	(0/Int)	______	(/)
Singing	(0/Cha)	______	(/)
Survival, Arctic	(0/Int)	______	(/)
______		______	(/)
______		______	(/)

Character ____________ Player ____________

Level ____________

Alignment ____________

Nylgai Hadirnoe Soldier

Class: Fighter **Race: Dwarf** **Sex: Male**
Clan: War Clan **Homeland: The OdderRhing**

ABILITIES

	STR	Hit Prob	Dmg Adj	Wgt Allow	Max Press	Op Drs	B B1 LG
	DEX	Rctn Adj		Missile Att Adj		Def Adj	
	CON	H P Adj	Sys Shk	Res Sur	Pois Save	Regen	
	INT	No of Lang	Spell Lvl	Lrn Sp	Spells/ Level	Spell Immun	
	WIS	Mag Def Adjus	Bonus Spells	Spell Fail	Spell Immun		
	CHR	Max No Hench	Loy Base	Rctn Adj			

The Nylgai Hadirnoe, or Scorned Dwarves, are a race of deep-dwelling dwarves that has shunned the surface world since the days of the Cataclysm. They are large-boned but lean, and their skins are paler than those of their surface kin.

Scorned dwarves are particularly adapted to underground life. They have infravision to 90 feet, but suffer a - 1 penalty to all actions involving sight when in full sunlight. They are expert smiths, stonecarvers, and brewmasters, but cannot initially begin with the proficiencies of seamanship, navigation, astrology, agriculture, riding (any mount), or any one dealing with animals.

All warriors begin with a suit of chain mail and a sharp sword or spear.

MOVEMENT

[ ] Base Rate

HIT POINTS

ARMOR

AC ______ Modifier

SAVING THROWS

______	Paralyze/ Poison	○
______	Rod, Staff, or Wand	○
______	Petrify/ Polymorph	○
______	Breath Weapon	○
______	Spells	○

Proficiencies/Skills/Languages

Blind-fighting	(–/–)	____________	(/)
Dwarven	(0/Int)	____________	(/)
Mining	(-3/Wis)	____________	(/)
____________		____________	(/)
____________		____________	(/)
____________		____________	(/)

Character ____________ Player ____________

Level ____________

Alignment ____________

Nyglai Hadirnoe Storysmith

Class: Bard **Race: Dwarf** **Sex: Male**
Clan: ____________ **Homeland: The Odder Rhing**

ABILITIES

	STR	Hit Prob	Dmg Adj	Wgt Allow	Max Press	Op Drs	B B/ LG
	DEX	Rctn Adj		Missile Att Adj		Def Adj	
	CON	HP Adj	Sys Shk	Res Sur	Pois Save	Regen	
	INT	No of Lang	Spell Lvl	Lrn Sp	Spells/ Level	Spell Immun	
	WIS	Mag Def Adjus	Bonus Spells	Spell Fail	Spell Immun		
	CHR	Max No Hench	Loy Base	Rctn Adj			

The Nylgai Hadirnoe, or Scorned Dwarves, are a race of deep-dwelling dwarves that has shunned the surface world since the days of the Cataclysm. They are large-boned but lean, and their skins are paler than those of their surface kin. They have infravision that extends to 90 feet, but suffer a -1 penalty to all rolls in bright sunlight.

The Storysmiths are the keepers of history and tradition for their people, filling the roles normally taken by priests and shamans. The storysmiths are the only dwarves allowed to be bards. As such they have certain changes and limitations to their abilities. Due to the nonmagical nature of dwarves, they can neither learn nor cast magical spells.

They have a vast knowledge and understanding of magical constructions, particularly weapons. They have a 7 % chance per experience level to know some facts about a magical item. Furthermore, when examining an item of dwarven make, they can roll a second check (providing the first succeeds) to name the specific powers and properties of the item.

Due to their understanding of their own kind, they gain a + 2 bonus to all encounter reactions with dwarves and gnomes. They cannot initially begin with the proficiencies of seamanship, navigation, astrology, agriculture, riding (any mount), or any one dealing with animals.

MOVEMENT

[ ] Base Rate

HIT POINTS

ARMOR ______

AC ______ Modifier

SAVING THROWS

______	Paralyze/ Poison	○
______	Rod, Staff, or Wand	○
______	Petrify/ Polymorph	○
______	Breath Weapon	○
______	Spells	○

Proficiencies/Skills/Languages

Ancient History	(-1/Int)	____________	(/)
Artistic Ability	(0/Wis)	____________	(/)
Dwarven	(0/Int)	____________	(/)
Etiquette	(0/Cha)	____________	(/)
Gaming	(0/Cha)	____________	(/)
Gnomish	(0/Int)	____________	(/)
Heraldry (Dwarven)	(0/Int)	____________	(/)
Mining	(-3/ Wis)	____________	(/)
Local History	(0/Cha)	____________	(/)
Read/Write Dwarven	(+1/Int)	____________	(/)
Stonemasonry	(-2/Str)	____________	(/)

Character__________ Player__________

Level ________

Alignment ________

SAVING THROWS

Nyglai Hadirnoe Scout

Class: Thief **Race: Dwarf** **Sex: Male or Female**
Clan: Warclan **Homeland: The Odder Rhing**

MOVEMENT

Base Rate

ABILITIES

	STR	Hit Prob	Dmg Adj	Wgt Allow	Max Press	Op Drs	B B/ L G
	DEX	Rctn Adj		Missile Att Adj		Def Adj	
	CON	HP Adj	Sys Shk	Res Sur	Pois Save	Regen	
	INT	No of Lang	Spell Lvl	Lrn Sp	Spells/ Level	Spell Immun	
	WIS	Mag Def Adjus	Bonus Spells	Spell Fail	Spell Immun		
	CHR	Max No Hench	Loy Base	Rctn Adj			

HIT POINTS

ARMOR

AC

Modifier

Saving Throw	
Paralyze/ Poison	
Rod, Staff, or Wand	
Petrify/ Polymorph	
Breath Weapon	
Spells	

The Nylgai Hadirnoe, or Scorned Dwarves, are a race of deep-dwelling dwarves that has shunned the surface world since the days of the Cataclysm. They are large-boned but lean, and their skins are paler than those of their surface kin. They have infravision that extends to 90 feet, but suffer a -1 penalty to all rolls in bright sunlight.

Scouts are thieves who specialize in stealth. They serve the army, reconnoitering the enemy. It can be grueling work, so in addition to the normal thief requirements, a scout must have a Constitution of 12 or greater.

Initially scouts cannot add points to the pick pockets or the read languages skills. They cannot initially begin with the proficiencies of seamanship, navigation, astrology, agriculture, riding (any mount), or any one dealing with animals.

Proficiencies/Skills/Languages

Blind-fighting	(—/—)		(/)
Dwarven	(0/Int)		(/)
Mining	(3/Wis)		(/)
Set Snares	(-1/Dex)		(/)
Stonemasonry	(-2/Str)		(/)
			(/)

Character__________ Player__________

Level________

Alignment________

SAVING THROWS

Minotaur Champion

Class: Fighter **Race: Minotaur** **Homeland: Minotaur League**
Sex: Male **Province:__________** **City /Town:__________**

MOVEMENT

Base Rate

ABILITIES

	STR	Hit Prob	Dmg Adj	Wgt Allow	Max Press	Op Drs	B B/ LG
	DEX	Rctn Adj		Missile Att Adj		Def Adj	
	CON	HP Adj	Sys Shk	Res Sur	Pois Save	Regen	
	INT	No of Lang	Spell Lvl	Lrn Sp	Spells/ Level	Spell Immun	
	WIS	Mag Def Adjus	Bonus Spells	Spell Fail	Spell Immun		
	CHR	Max No Hench	Loy Base	Rctn Adi			

HIT POINTS

ARMOR

AC

Modifier

Saving Throw	
Paralyze/ Poison	
Petrify/ Polymorph	
Breath Weapon	
Spells	

Minotaurs stand approximately seven feet or more in height and are a heavily muscled people. The champions are professional gladiators, hired to represent one side or the other in a lawsuit fought in the arena. It is the skill of the champion that determines the guilt or innocence of the accused.

Minotaur champions must specialize in a weapon (of their choice). Their reputations are formidable, so they gain a + 1 bonus to combat encounter reactions when they identify themselves. They do not attract followers at higher levels.

Proficiencies/Skills/Languages

Endurance	(0/Con)		(/)
Kothian	(0/Int)		(/)
			(/)
			(/)
			(/)
			(/)
			(/)
			(/)
			(/)

Character ______________ Player ______________

Level ______

Alignment ______

Upright Man

Class: Thief **Race: Human, Elf, or Dwarf** **Sex: Male or Female**
Homeland: Minotaur League **Province:** ______
City/Town: ______

ABILITIES

STR	Hit Prob	Dmg Adj	Wgt Allow	Max Press	Op Drs	B B/ L G
DEX	Rctn Adj	Missile Att Adj	Def Adj			
CON	HP Adj	Sys Shk	Res Sur	Pois Save	Regen	
INT	No of Lang	Spell Lvl	Lrn Sp	Spells/ Level	Spell Immun	
WIS	Mag Def Adjus	Bonus Spells	Spell Fail	Spell Immun		
CHR	Max No Hench	Loy Base	Rctn Adj			

Upright men (or women) are the scalawags and scoundrels of the empire. Beginning as small-time thieves, many aspire to reach the ranks of the upright men, leaders of gangs or families.

Upright men are noted throughout the empire for both their skill and ruthlessness. As such, they gain a + 1 encounter reaction with all other thieves who have heard of them. In addition, each upright man can call upon 1d3 companions (of equal level but perhaps different talents) once per level. They will join him for one specific task and may require services of him at some later date.

MOVEMENT

Base Rate

HIT POINTS

ARMOR

AC

SAVING THROWS

______	Paralyze/ Poison
______	Rod, Staff, or Wand
______	Petrify/ Polymorph
______	Breath Weapon
Modifier	Spells

Proficiencies/Skills/Languages

Gaming	(0/Cha)	(/)
Kothian	(0/Int)	(/)
Local History	(0/Cha)	(/)
		(/)
		(/)
		(/)

Character ______________ Player ______________

Level ______

Alignment ______

Silvanaes Qualith

Class: Fighter/Mage **Race: Elf or Half-elf**
Sex: Male or Female **Homeland: Armach-nesti**

ABILITIES

STR	Hit Prob	Dmg Adj	wgt Allow	Max Press	Op Drs	B B/ L G
DEX	Rctn Adj	Missile Att Adj	Def Adj			
CON	HP Adj	Sys Shk	Res Sur	Pois Save	Regen	
INT	No of Lang	Spell Lvl	Lrn Sp	Spells/ Level	Spell Immun	
WIS	Mag Def Adjus	Bonus Spells	Spell Fail	Spell Immun		
CHR	Max No Hench	Loy Base	Rctn Adj			

The Silvanaes are a band of lost elves, blown across the ocean from the lands of Silvanesti in Ansalon. They have struggled to make a home for themselves and keep alive their old traditions.

Qualith is their term for a fighter/mage. While they do not have any particular extraordinary abilities (as do some of the inhabitants of Taladas) the Silvanaes are generally better educated and bred than their neighbors. All qualith begin with a sword and leather armor.

MOVEMENT

Base Rate

HIT POINTS

ARMOR

AC

SAVING THROWS

______	Paralyze/ Poison
______	Rod, Staff, or Wand
______	Petrify/ Polymorph
______	Breath Weapon
Modifier	Spells

Proficiencies/Skills/Languages

Agriculture	(0Int)	(/)
Ancient History	(-1/Int)	(/)
Animal Lore	(0/Int)	(/)
Etiquette	(0/Cha)	(/)
Hoor	(0/Int)	(/)
Read/Write Silvanesti	(+1/Int)	(/)
Silvanesti	(0/Int)	(/)
		(/)
		(/)

Character ________________ Player ________________

Level ________

Alignment ________

Thenolian Nobleman

Class: Fighter or Ranger **Race: Human**
Sex: Male or Female **Homeland: Thenol**

ABILITIES

	STR	Hit Prob	Dmg Adj	wgt Allow	Max Press	Op Drs	B B/ LG
	DEX	Rctn Adj		Missile Att Adj		Def Adj	
	CON	HP Adj	Sys Shk	Res Sur	Pois Save	Regen	
	INT	No of Lang	Spell Lvl	Lrn Sp	Spells/ Level	Spell Immun	
	WIS	Mag Def Adjus	Bonus Spells	Spell Fail	Spell Immun		
	CHR	Max No Hench		Loy Base		Rctn Adj	

MOVEMENT

Base Rate

HIT POINTS

ARMOR

AC ____ Modifier

SAVING THROWS

____	Paralyze/ Poison ○
____	Rod, Staff or Wand ○
____	Petrify/ Polymorph ○
____	Breath Weapon ○
____	Spells ○

The Thenolian noblemen are descendants of the powerful ruling families of ancient Aurim, an empire that existed before the Cataclysm. They have lost much of their power to the evil priests of Hiteh, who have come to control Thenol. Thus, there is little love lost between the noblemen and the priests.

Player character noblemen are assumed to be the children of one of the Lords of the Senate, once the ruling body of Thenol. Roll 1d4 to determine the status of the family estates on the following table:

1 Dispossessed by priests of Hiteh
2 Penurious due to bad management
3 Disinherited by father
4 Banished as heretic

In any case, the family property will not automatically fall into the hands of the player character. Through adventures, he may be able to restore all or part of his family's honor and properties. He will not attract followers until he has regained his properties. However, he does begin with a small amount of property: a horse, chain mail armor, shield, lance and sword.

Proficiencies/Skills/Languages

Etiquette	**(0/Cha)**	(/)
Heraldry, Thenolite	(0/Int)	(/)
Hunting	(-1/Wis)	(/)
Riding, Horse	(+3/Wis)	(/)
Thenolian	(0/Int)	(/)
		(/)
		(/)

Character ________________ Player ________________

Level ________

Alignment ________

Bakali Warrior

Class: Fighter **Race: Bakali**
Sex: Male **Tribe: ________** **Homeland: Blackwater Glade**

ABILITIES

	STR	Hit Prob	Dmg Adj	Wgt Allow	Max Press	Op Drs	B B/ LG
	DEX	Rctn Adj		Missile Att Adj		Def Adj	
	CON	HP Adj	Sys Shk	Res Sur	Pois Save	Regen	
	INT	No of Lang	Spell Lvl	Lrn Sp	Spells/ Level	Spell Immun	
	WIS	Mag Def Adjus	Bonus Spells	Spell Fail	Spell Immun		
	CHR	Max No Hench		Loy Base		Rctn Adj	

MOVEMENT

Base Rate

HIT POINTS

ARMOR

AC ____ Modifier

SAVING THROWS

____	Paralyze / Poison ○
____	Rod, Staff, or Wand ○
____	Petrify/ Polymorph ○
____	Breath Weapon ○
____	Spells ○

The bakali are a race of lizard men who, while powerful and brutish, are not entirely savage and unintelligent. They keep to themselves, mistrustful of all others-humans, demihumans, and humanoids alike. Some do venture outside their lands, often serving in the armies of Thenol.

Bakali warriors, while often seen as blood-thirsty, are bound by a specific code of honor. Bakali live by their word and do not give it lightly. Once given, the character must honor it (or try his best) or suffer an alignment change, regardless of the character's alignment. They have long memories for friends and enemies and particularly hate the Swampers.

Because of their primitive natures, bakali cannot initially learn technological proficiencies, such as blacksmithing, engineering, or stonemasonry.

Proficiencies/Skills/Languages

Animal Lore	(0/Int)	(/)
Bakali	(0/Int)	(/)
Fishing	(-1/Wis)	(/)
Hunting	(-1/Wis)	(/)
Set Snares	(-1/Int)	(/)
Survival, Swamp	(0/Int)	(/)
Swimming	(0/Str)	(/)
Tracking	(0/Wis)	(/)
		(/)

Character ____________ Player ____________

Level ________

Alignment ________

Swamper

Class: Ranger **Race: Human**

Sex: Male or Female **Homeland: Blackwater Glade**

ABILITIES

STR	Hit Prob	Dmg Adj	wgt Allow	Max Press	Op Drs	B B/ LG
DEX	Rctn Adj		Missile Att Adj		Def Adj	
CON	HP Adj	Sys Shk	Res Sur	Pois Save	Regen	
INT	No of Lang	Spell Lvl	Lrn Sp	Spells/ Level	Spell Immun	
WIS	Mag Def Adjus	Bonus spells	Spell Fail	Spell Immun		
CHR	Max No Hench	Loy Base	Rctn Adj			

The swampers are a group of independent-minded frontiersmen who live on the fringes of Blackwater Glade. Although properly citizens of Thenol, the Swampers pay little mind to the rules and edicts of the government. Living off the swamp, they are expert hunters and trappers. Sometimes they serve in an army (mostly of Thenol) as guides and scouts, although this creates problems because of their alignment. There is no love lost between the Swampers and the Bakali from the depths of the glade. As such, rangers of this people must choose the Bakali as their species enemy.

All Swampers begin with a small amount of equipment. This includes a sturdy sword, leather armor (homemade), and a small flat-bottomed boat or a canoe.

Swampers also begin with knowledge of Blackwater Glade and the hidden paths and channels that cross through it. In the Glade, they reduce the chance of getting lost just as a skilled guide would.

MOVEMENT: ____ Base Rate

HIT POINTS

ARMOR

AC ____ Modifier

SAVING THROWS

- ____ Paralyze/ Poison
- ____ Rod, Staff, or Wand
- ____ Petrify Polymorph
- ____ Breath Weapon
- ____ Spells

Proficiencies/Skills/Languages

Animal Lore	(0/Int)	Seamanship	(+1/Dex)
Bakali	(0/Int)	Swimming	(0/Str)
Carpentry	(0/Str)	Thenolian	(0/Int)
Direction Sense	(+1/Wis)	Tracking	(0/Wis)
Fishing	(-1/Wis)	____	(/)
Herbalism	(-2/Int)	____	(/)
Hunting	(-1/Wis)	____	(/)

Character ____________ Player ____________

Level ________

Alignment ________

Hulderfolk

Class: Fighter/Mage **Race: Elf**

Sex: Male or Female **Homeland: Okami or the Hulder Wood**

ABILITIES

STR	Hit Prob	Dmg Adj	Wgt Allow	Max Press	Op Drs	B B/ LG
DEX	Rctn Adj		Missile Att Adj		Def Adj	
CON	HP Adj	Sys Shk	Res Sur	Pois Save	Regen	
INT	No of Lang	Spell Lvl	Lrn Sp	spells/ Level	Spell Immun	
WIS	Mag Def Adjus	Bonus Spells	Spell Fail	Spell Immun		
CHR	Max No Hench	Loy Base	Rctn Adj			

The hulderfolk (Hidden People) are an ancient race of elves that has kept to the old traditions. In appearance they look much like normal elves, although they dress in clothes of green leaves, bark, spider silk, and flowers.

The hulderfolk avoid all contact with humans, hiding from them whenever possible, but they have no strong animosities toward the other races. They can hide in shadows and move silently as a ranger of the same level. They must specialize in spells of enchantment or illusion.

The hulderfolk have many restrictions on their behavior. They cannot break their word. Cold steel (an extremely rare and special metal) automatically negates their magic and the mere touch of it causes 1 point of damage. They do not voluntarily enter places of worship and their magic does not function there. Finally, each has a secret name and anyone who knows it is immune to that hulder's magical spells.

MOVEMENT: ____ Base Rate

ARMOR

AC ____ Modifier

SAVING THROWS

- ____ Paralyze/ Poison
- ____ Rod, Staff, or Wand
- ____ Petrify/ Polymorph
- ____ Breath Weapon
- ____ Spells

Proficiencies/Skills/Languages

Ancient History	(-1/Int)	____	(/)
Animal Lore	(0/Int)	____	(/)
Artistic Ability	(0/Wis)	____	(/)
Dancing	(0/Dex)	____	(/)
Elf, Ancient	(0/Int)	____	(/)
Etiquette	(0/Cha)	____	(/)
Herbalism	(-2/Wis)	____	(/)
Spellcraft	(-2/Int)	____	(/)
____		____	(/)

Character ____________ Player ____________

Level ________

Alignment ________

Marak Kender Warrior

Class: Fighter/Thief **Race: Kender**
Sex: Male or Female **Homeland: Marak Valleys**

ABILITIES

	STR	Hit Prob	Dmg Adj	Wgt Allow	Max Press	Op Drs	B B/ LG
	DEX	Rctn Adj		Missile Att Adj		Def Adj	
	CON	HP Adj	Sys Shk	Res Sur	Pois Save	Regen	
	INT	No of Lang	Spell Lvl	Lrn Sp	Spells/ Level	Spell Immun	
	WIS	Mag Def Adjus	Bonus Spells	Spell Fail	Spell Immun		
	CHR	Max No Hench	Loy Base	Rctn Adj			

The Marak kender are a special branch of the kender race, differentiated by their attitude toward life. Similar in appearance to other kender, they favor more somber colors for their dress. This, however is only a minor outward manifestation of their difference.

While still a curious race, they are suspicious, distrustful, even paranoid of others. Their curiosity drives them to check everything and everyone out-"just for safety's sake." They take things not because they are thieves, but to make sure the odds are always in their favor.

Marak kender use the hoopaui, a stonebow (range 4/8/12, Dmg 1d4 +1/1d6) and each character begins with one, along with a bag of bullets. Beyond this, they have the abilities of kender as described in the *DRAGONLANCE® Adventures* book.

MOVEMENT

Base Rate

HIT POINTS

ARMOR

AC

Modifier

SAVING THROWS

- Paralyze/ Poison
- Rod, Staff, or Wand
- Petrify/ Polymorph
- Breath Weapon
- Spells

Proficiencies/Skills/Languages

Agriculture	(0/Int)		(/)
Auric	(0/Int)		(/)
Local History	(0/Cha)		(/)
Set Snares	(-1/Dex)		(/)
			(/)
			(/)
			(/)

Character ____________ Player ____________

Level ________

Alignment ________

Fianawar

Class: Fighter **Race: Dwarf** **Sex: Male**
Clan: Fianawar **Homeland: The Steamwall**

ABILITIES

	STR	Hit Prob	Dmg Adj	Wgt Allow	Max Press	Op Drs	B B/ LG
	DEX	Rctn Adj		Missile Att Adj		Def Adj	
	CON	HP Adj	Sys Shk	Res Sur	Pois Save	Regen	
	INT	No of Lang	Spell Lvl	Lrn Sp	Spells/ Level	Spell Immun	
	WIS	Mag Def Adjus	Bonus Spells	Spell Fail	Spell Immun		
	CHR	Max No Hench	Loy Base	Rctn Adj			

As a group, the Fianawar are a dour and unhappy people and an anomaly among dwarves. Unlike their brethren who dwell underground, the Fianawar live on the surface and virtually never go beneath the ground. Centuries of earthquakes and volcanic upheavals have left them with a dread fear of life beneath the surface.

Fianawar dwarves gain a +1 bonus to Strength (up to their racial maximum). However, they must roll a successful saving throw vs. death in order to overcome their fear of the underground before they can enter such places as dungeons, caves, and tombs. If the check fails, they will not enter. They must also make a check once a day when underground. If failed they will want only to leave by the most direct route.

MOVEMENT

Base Rate

HIT POINTS

ARMOR

AC

Modifier

SAVING THROWS

- Paralyze/ Poison
- Rod, Staff, or Wand
- Petrify Polymorph
- Breath Weapon
- Spells

Proficiencies/Skills/Languages

Appraising	(0/Int)		(/)
Armorer	(-2/Int)		(/)
Blacksmithing	(0/Str)		(/)
Dwarven	(0/Int)		(/)
Stonemasonry	(-2/Str)		(/)
Weaponsmithing	(-3/Int)		(/)

Character ______________________ Player ________________

Level __________

Alignment __________

Abaqua Hunter

Class: Fighter **Race: Ogre** **Sex: Male**
Tribe: __________ **Homeland: Western Ring Mountains**

ABILITIES

	STR	Hit Prob	Dmg Adj	Wgt Allow	Max Press	Op Drs	B B/ LG
	DEX	Rctn Adj		Missile Att Adj		Def Adj	
	CON	HP Adj	Sys Shk	Res Sur	Pois Save	Regen	
	INT	No of Lang	Spell Lvl	Lrn Sp	Spells/ Level	Spell Immun	
	WIS	Mag Def Adjus	Bonus Spells	Spell Fail	Spell Immun		
	CHR	Max No Hench	Loy Base	Rctn Adj			

The ogres of the Ring Mountains are a primitive and brutish race, yet they are not totally beyond redemption. For the most part, they prefer to keep to themselves, driving off intruders.

The Abaqua (as the ogres call themselves) are excellent hunters and woodsmen, although they lack the aptitude and wisdom to be rangers. They lead simple lives as hunters and gatherers. They make little use of metal tools or complex skills.

Initially, an Abaqua warrior cannot learn the following proficiencies: agriculture, blacksmithing, cobbling, mining, pottery, riding (any mount), seamanship, stonemasonry, weaving, engineering, musical instrument, reading/ writing, armorer, bowyer/ fletcher, charioteering, gaming, gem cutting, or weaponsmithing. All warriors begin with a wooden club, several throwing rocks, and a wooden spear.

MOVEMENT

Base Rate

HIT POINTS

ARMOR

AC

Modifier

SAVING THROWS

______	Paralyze/ Poison	○
______	Rod, Staff, or Wand	○
______	Petrify/ Polymorph	○
______	Breath Weapon	○
______	Spells	○

Proficiencies/Skills/Languages

Abaquan	(0/Int)	______	(/)
Endurance	(O/Con)	______	(/)
Fire-building	(-1/Wis)	______	(/)
Hunting	(-1/Wis)	______	(/)
Survival, Forest	(0/Int)	______	(/)
Tracking	(0/Wis)	______	(/)
Weather Sense	(-1/Wis)	______	(/)

Character ______________________ Player ________________

Level __________

Alignment __________

Glass Sailor

Class: Fighter **Race: Human**
Sex: Male or Female **Homeland: The Shining Lands**

ABILITIES

	STR	Hit Prob	Dmg Adj	Wgt Allow	Max Press	Op Drs	B B/ LG
	DEX	Rctn Adj		Missile Att Adj		Def Adj	
	CON	HP Adj	Sys Shk	Res Sur	Pois Save	Regen	
	INT	No of Lang	Spell Lvl	Lrn Sp	Spells/ Level	Spell Immun	
	WIS	Mag Def Adjus	Bonus Spells	Spell Fall	Spell Immun		
	CHR	Max No Hench	Loy Base	Rctn Adi			

The Glass Sailors are a tall, slender race, one of the tallest people in all Taladas. Born and raised in the dangerous plains of glass, they are fiercely independent and unflinching. Glass Sailor characters gain a +1 saving throw bonus to resist all types of fear, magical or otherwise.

Player character Glass Sailors are outcasts or exiles from their own people and can return to their lands only by risking death.

All Glass Sailor characters begin with a complete set of underground and above-ground clothing and one set of beetle carapace armor, in addition to an assortment of darts and a glass-bladed sword.

MOVEMENT

Base Rate

HIT POINTS

ARMOR

AC

Modifier

SAVING THROWS

______	Paralyze / Poison	○
______	Rod, Staff, or Wand	○
______	Petrify/ Polymorph	○
______	Breath Weapon	○
______	Spells	○

Proficiencies/Skills/Languages

Auric	(0/Int)	______	(/)
Direction Sense	(+1/Wis)	______	(/)
Navigation (if male)	(-2/Int)	______	(/)
Singing (if female)	(0/Cha)	______	(/)
Survival, Desert	(0/Int)	______	(/)
______		______	(/)
______		______	(/)
______		______	

Character ____________ Player ____________

Level ________

SAVING THROWS

Alignment ________

Payan Mako Tribesman

Class: Fighter **Race: Human**

Sex: Male **Homeland: Syldar of the Fisheries**

ABILITIES

STR	Hit Prob	Dmg Adj	Wgt Allow	Max Press	Op Drs	B B/ LG
DEX	Rctn Adj		Missile Att Adj		Def Adj	
CON	HP Adj	Sys Shk	Res Sur	Pois Save	Regen	
INT	No of Lang	Spell Lvl	Lrn Sp	Spells/ Level	Spell Immun	
WIS	Mag Def Adjus	Bonus Spells	Spell Fail	Spell Immun		
CHR	Max No Hench	Loy Base	Rctn Adj			

MOVEMENT

Base Rate

HIT POINTS

ARMOR

AC

Modifier

Paralyze/ Poison

Rod, Staff, or Wand

Petrify/ Polymorph

Breath Weapon

Spells

The Payan Mako are a short, bronze-skinned race of fishermen that lives among the subtropical islands of the Fisheries. Here they try to lead quiet and peaceful lives fishing in the rich waters and living off the fruits of the land. Men dress in simple loin cloths and shave their heads. Their main enemies are the demon-men (hobgoblins) and Shark Men, a secret cult bent on conquering all the Fisheries.

Although warriors, the Payan Mako are not particularly skilled at combat (since they fight so seldom). Thus, their THAC0s are always 1 higher than those of normal fighters of the same level, and they cannot specialize in any weapon. However, they are extremely tough and so begin play with 1d10 +4 hit points. Every warrior begins play with a shark-tooth spear and dagger.

Proficiencies/Skills/Languages

Direction sense	(+1/Wis)		(/)
Fire-building	(-1/Wis)		(/)
Fishing	(-1/Wis)		(/)
Navigation	(-2/Int)		(/)
Payan	(0/Int)		(/)
Seamanship	(+1/Dex)		(/)
Survival, Tropical	(0/Int)		(/)
Swimming	(0/Str)		(/)
Weather Sense	(-1/Wis)		(/)

Character ____________ Player ____________

Level ________

SAVING THROWS

Alignment ________

Cha'asii

Class: Fighter or Fighter/Mage **Race: Elf**

Sex: Male or Female **Homeland: Neron**

ABILITIES

STR	Hit Prob	Dmg Adj	wgt Allow	Max Press	Op Drs	B B/ LG
DEX	Rctn Adj		Missile Att Adj		Def Adj	
CON	HP Adj	Sys Shk	Res Sur	Pois Save	Regen	
INT	No of Lang	Spell Lvl	Lrn Sp	Spells/ Level	Spell Immun	
WIS	Mag Def Adjus	Bonus Spells	Spell Fail	Spell Immun		
CHR	Max No Hench	Loy Base	Rctn Adj			

MOVEMENT

Base Rate

HIT POINTS

ARMOR

AC

Modifier

Paralyze Poison

Rod, Staff, or Wand

Petrify/ Polymorph

Breath Weapon

Spells

The cha'asii or wild elves are a distinctly different branch of the elvish race, easily identified from all others. Over the centuries, the cha'asii have adapted to life in the thick forests of Neron. Average height is only 4' 9" and almost none reach five feet in height. Skin tone ranges from wood-brown to yellow-green. Hair colors vary similarly from brown to green-black.

Cha'asii warriors make use of many sleeping potions and strange compounds and player characters will know how to brew these, given the materials from the forest. They do not make or use poisons.

Mages specialize in a forgotten form of the lore known as nature magic (see the "Cha'asii Mages" section, page 28-29, for an explanation of this branch of magic and the list of allowed spells). Cha'asii have no written language and do not know how to read or write (but they can learn).

Proficiencies/Skills/Languages

Ancient History	(-1/Int)	Spellcraft	(-2/Int)
Animal Lore	(0/Int)	Survival, Jungle	(0/Int)
Artistic Ability	(0/Wis)		(/)
Carpentry	(0/Str)		(/)
Cha'asii	(0/Int)		(/)
Herbalism	(-2/Int)		(/)
Hunting	(-1/Wis)		(/)
Singing	(0/Cha)		(/)

Character ______________ Player ______________

Level ______

Alignment ______

SAVING THROWS

______ Paralyze/ Poison ○

______ Rod, Staff, or Wand ○

______ Petrify/ Polymorph ○

______ Breath Weapon ○

______ Spells ○

MOVEMENT

Base Rate

HIT POINTS

ARMOR

AC ______ Modifier

Recorder

Class: Mage
Sex: Male or Female

Race: Human or Half-elf
Homeland: Baltch

ABILITIES

	STR	Hit Prob	Dmg Adj	Wgt Allow	Max Press	Op Drs	B B/ LG
	DEX	Rctn Adj		Missile Att Adj		Def Adj	
	CON	HP Adj	Sys Shk	Res Sur	Pois Save	Regen	
	INT	No of Lang	Spell Lvl	Lrn Sp	Spells/ Level	Spell Immun	
	WIS	Mag Def Adjus	Bonus Spells	Spell Fail	Spell Immun		
	CHR	Max No Hench	Loy Base	Rctn Adj			

The Recorders of Baltch are wizards in the service of the government. They are much like wizards everywhere, but they tend to specialize in greater divination and alteration. Baltch is protected from the ocean by a series of dikes and seawalls that require constant vigilance and repair. The Recorders assist the Engineers (the rulers of Baltch) somewhat in making repairs, but mostly by tracking and organizing the population into the necessary work teams.

Since the Recorders are part of the government, they (including player characters) must follow the orders of the Engineers, should such orders be given. Thus, characters may find times when they are ordered to undertake particular missions. As compensation, the Recorders have the status of privileged public servants on Baltch and are treated accordingly.

Proficiencies/Skills/Languages

Baltch (0/Int) ______ (/)

Engineering (-3/Int) ______ (/)

Read/Write Baltch (+1/Int) ______ (/)

Seamanship (+1/Dex) ______ (/)

Spellcraft (-2/Int) ______ (/)

Stonemasonry (-2/Str) ______ (/)

Weather Sense (-1/Wis) ______ (/)

Character ______________ Player ______________

Level ______

Alignment ______

SAVING THROWS

______ Paralyze/ Poison ○

______ Rod, Staff, or Wand ○

______ Petrify/ Polymorph ○

______ Breath Weapon ○

______ Spells ○

MOVEMENT

Base Rate

HIT POINTS

ARMOR

AC ______ Modifier

Islander

Class: Any
Sex: Male or Female

Race: Human, Kender, or Dwarf
Homeland: Rainward Isles

ABILITIES

	STR	Hit Prob	Dmg Adj	Wgt Allow	Max Press	Op Drs	B B/ LG
	DEX	Rctn Adj		Missile Att Adj		Def Adj	
	CON	HP Adj	Sys Shk	Res Sur	Pois Save	Regen	
	INT	No of Lang	Spell Lvl	Lrn Sp	Spells/ Level	Spell Immun	
	WIS	Mag Def Adjus	Bonus Spells	Spell Fail	Spell Immun		
	CHR	Max No Hench	Loy Base	Rctn Adj			

The people of the Rainward Isles are among some of the most blessed of all in Taladas, for somehow they have survived the worst ravages of the Cataclysm and its aftereffects to emerge stronger and more unified than ever before.

Unlike most other lands, where race is an important issue, the People (as they call themselves) have learned to live in peace with each other-dwarves, kender and humans view each other as equals, each contributing to society. This mingling of societies has broadened the outlook and training of all the Islanders. The People all gain a + 1 bonus to encounter reactions when dealing with foreigners not of their race, because they lack the racial prejudices of others.

Communities of the People are strong and supportive. Every person is a part of the militia, serving to the best of his capacity. Thus, while at home, characters may be called out to deal with some danger. They can also call upon their neighbors in turn for support and aid in times of trouble.

Proficiencies/Skills/Languages

Hunting (-1/Wis) ______ (/)

Fishing (-1/Wis) ______ (/)

Auric (0/Int) ______ (/)

Local History (0/Cha) ______ (/)

______ ______ (/)

______ ______ (/)

______ ______ (/)

Character ________________ Player ________________

Hitehkel Engineer

Class: Tinker **Race: Gnome, Gnomoi, or Minoi**
Sex: Male **Homeland: Hitehkel** **Citadel: ________**

ABILITIES

	STR	Hit Prob	Dmg Adj	Wgt Allow	Max Press	Op Drs	B B/ LG
	DEX	Rctn Adj		Missile Att Adj		Def Adj	
	CON	HP Adj	Sys Shk	Res Sur	Pois Save	Regen	
	INT	No of Lang	Spell Lvl	Lrn Sp	Spells/ Level	Spell Immun	
	WIS	Mag Def Adjus	Bonus Spells		Spell Fail	Spell Immun	
	CHR	Max No Hench		Loy Base		Rctn Adj	

The engineers of Hitehkel (most of whom are gnomoi) are an industrious and creative lot. From their plans and designs have come such things as the fire-fleets, the wind-riders, elevator systems, and more. Unlike their Boli brothers (who specialize in small and intricate mechanisms), the Hitehkel tinkers think big. They are responsible for most of the large machines and devices (the ones that work, that is) found throughout Krynn today.

Hitehkel gnomes can choose virtually any field of study. The majority study aerodynamics, architecture, mechanics, metallurgy, pneumatics, thermodynamics, and transportation. They are not particularly skilled at making small things, and so the cost in complexity is doubled if an invention needs to be reduced in size.

Level ________

Alignment ________

MOVEMENT

Base Rate

HIT POINTS

ARMOR

AC

SAVING THROWS

____	Paralyze/ Poison	○
____	Rod, Staff, or Wand	○
____	Petrify/ Polymorph	○
____	Breath Weapon	○
____ Modifier	Spells	○

Proficiencies/Skills/Languages

Blacksmithing	(0/Str)	(/)
Carpentry	(0/Str)	(/)
Engineering	(-3/Int)	(/)
Gnomish	(0/Int)	(/)
Read/Write Gnomish	(+1/Int)	(/)
Stonemasonrv	(-2/Str)	(/)

Character ________________ Player ________________

Ilmaskhod

Class: Thief **Race: Gnome (Gnomoi)**
Sex: Male or Female **Homeland: Hitehkel** **Citadel: ________**

ABILITIES

	STR	Hit Prob	Dmg Adj	Wgt Allow	Max Press	Op Drs	B B/ LG
	DEX	Rctn Adj		Missile Att Adj		Def Adj	
	CON	HP Adj	Sys Shk	Res Sur	Pois Save	Regen	
	INT	No of Lang	Spell Lvl	Lrn Sp	Spells! Level	Spell Immun	
	WIS	Mag Def Adjus	Bonus Spells		Spell Fail	Spell Immun	
	CHR	Max No Hench		Loy Base		Rctn Adj	

Not all the gnomes of Hitehkel are tinkers, obsessed with building strange new inventions. Quite a few are thieves, raised in trained in one of the most challenging environs a thief could ever learn in-the strange, device-packed citadels of the gnomes. Here thieves have had to practice their skills not only against ordinary challenges but also against ever-improving security inventions designed by irate tinkers.

Because of this, an ilmaskhod (as a gnomoi thief is called) is more skilled at opening locks and finding and removing traps than most thieves. When dealing with gnomish devices, the normal scores for the character are used. When dealing with devices made by others, the thief gains an additional 10% to his chance of success. In short, he finds the locks and traps of non-gnomes simple compared to the cunning devices designed by his brethren. However, ilmaskhod disdain killing and so can never gain more than a "x3" backstab bonus.

Level ________

Alignment ________

MOVEMENT

Base Rate

HIT POINTS

ARMOR

AC

SAVING THROWS

____	Paralyze/ Poison	○
____	Rod, Staff, or Wand	○
____	Petrify/ Polymorph	○
____	Breath Weapon	○
____ Modifier	Spells	○

Proficiencies/Skills/Languages

Appraising	(0/Int)	(/)
Engineering	(-3/Int)	(/)
Gnomish	(0/Int)	(/)
Read/Write Gnomish	(0/Int)	(/)
		(/)
		(/)

Character ____________ Player ____________

Companion of the Dead

Class: Fighter **Race: Gnome**
Sex: Male **Homeland: Hitehkel** **Citadel:** ________

ABILITIES

	STR	Hit Prob	Dmg Adj	Wgt Allow	Max Press	Op Drs	B B/ L G
	DEX	Rctn Adj	Missile Att Adj	Def Adj			
	CON	H P Adj	Sys Shk	Res Sur	Pois Save	Regen	
	INT	No of Lang	Spell Lv1	Lrn Sp	Spells/ Level	Spell Immun	
	WIS	Mag Def Adjus	Bonus Spells	Spell Fail	Spell Immun		
	CHR	Max No Hench	Loy Base	Rctn Adj			

The Company of the Dead (to which the Companions belong) is an elite fighting force of the gnomish army. They are easily identified by the skull-white face paint and skeletal helmets they wear into battle.

When they have taken time to prepare themselves (don their warpaint, etc.), the Companions gain a + 1 bonus to their attack and damage rolls, in melee combat only. This frenzy lasts until the course of the battle is finished; during this time they take no prisoners. Preparation takes 30 minutes and when it is finished, the character must enter immediately into combat.

The Companions have earned their title by giving up all connections to their past life. They are "dead" to the rest of the world. They no longer have family or old friends. Furthermore, they will not make new friends, except within the Company, since they consider themselves dead to the world. This attitude makes them difficult to get along with.

Level ________

Alignment ________

MOVEMENT

[ ] Base Rate

HIT POINTS

ARMOR

AC

SAVING THROWS

____	Paralyze/ Poison	○
____	Rod, Staff, or Wand	○
____	Petrify/ Polymorph	○
____	Breath Weapon	○
____ Modifier	Spells	○

Proficiencies/Skills/Languages

Endurance	(0/Con)	________	(/)
Gnomish	(0/Int)	________	(/)
________		________	(/)
________		________	(/)
________		________	(/)
________		________	(/)
________		________	(/)

Character ____________ Player ____________

Boli Tinker

Class: Tinker (see *DRAGONLANCE® Adventures* book)
Race: Gnome (Minoi or Gnomoi) **Sex: Male**
Citadel: ________ **Homeland: The Land of Columns**

ABILITIES

	STR	Hit Prob	Dmg Adj	Wgt Allow	Max Press	O p Drs	B B/ L G
	DEX	Rctn Adj	Missile Att Adj	Def Adj			
	CON	H P Adj	Sys Shk	Res Sur	Pois Save	Regen	
	INT	No of Lang	Spell LV1	Lrn Sp	Spells/ Level	Spell Immun	
	WIS	Mag Def Adjus	Bonus Spells	Spell Fail	Spell Immun		
	CHR	Max No Hench	Loy Base	Rctn Adj			

The Boli gnomes, like all of their race, are a small but ingenious people, given to a love of devices, mechanical ones in particular. The Boli gnomes are incredibly skilled in the construction of small devices. especially clockwork.

Boli tinkers specialize in the study of mechanics, optics, clockwork, metallurgy, and glass-making. Furthermore, they are skilled in the jeweler's arts.

Tinker gnomes begin the campaign with a small collection of tools (enough to fill a small pack) suitable for work on finely detailed items and also useful as thieves' tools.

Level ________

Alignment ________

MOVEMENT

[ ] Base Rate

HIT POINTS

ARMOR

AC

SAVING THROWS

____	Paralyze/ Poison	○
____	Rod, Staff, or Wand	○
____	Petrify/ Polymorph	○
____	Breath Weapon	○
____ Modifier	Spells	○

Proficiencies/Skills/Languages

Appraising	(0/Int)	________	(/)
Auric	(0/Int)	________	(/)
Engineering	(-3/Int)	________	(/)
Gem Cutting	(-2/Dex)	________	(/)
Gnomish	(0/Int)	________	(/)
________		________	(/)
________		________	
________		________	

Although the *Guide Book to Taladas* describes many things about the people of the continent, no mention is made of the languages used by the different people. This is intentional because the ability to communicate is vital to your role-playing game. Information about languages has been extracted, both so you can find the information quickly and so you can make whatever changes you need to adapt to your campaign and your player characters. The information here can be used as rules or as a guideline, a starting point for changes that work best for your campaign.

On Taladas, there is no common speech that is universally known by every character and monster the players encounter. Instead, there are a number of language families that form the roots for nearly all the spoken languages of Taladas. The languages within each family share many common features-so many that speakers of different tongues within the same family can make themselves understood to each other. In addition some languages of different families share common features based on geography. Thus, elves of the Tamire borrow words and phrases from the tongues of the Uigan and Ilquar goblins. Even with all these similarities, communication is not without some difficulty and there are moments when resorting to gestures and pantomime is helpful, even vital.

To determine how similar different languages are, all the basic language groups of Taladas (and a few of Ansalon) have been placed on the Taladan Language Chart. The languages have been arranged to show their relationships. Interrelated languages (either by family or borrowings) are connected by lines. The number of dots on these lines is an indication of the closeness of the two languages.

Of course, each character is assumed to speak his native tongue with 100% fluency. To determine how well he speaks and understands a related tongue, trace a path from his native language to the other language. Each dot and box crossed (including the box enclosing the *other* language's name, but not that enclosing the characters' native language, on the chart) reduces comprehension by 10%. For example, a Uigan fighter would have a 70% comprehension of Tamire elven (the path connecting the languages crosses two dots and the Tamire box, so 30% is subtracted from 100%).

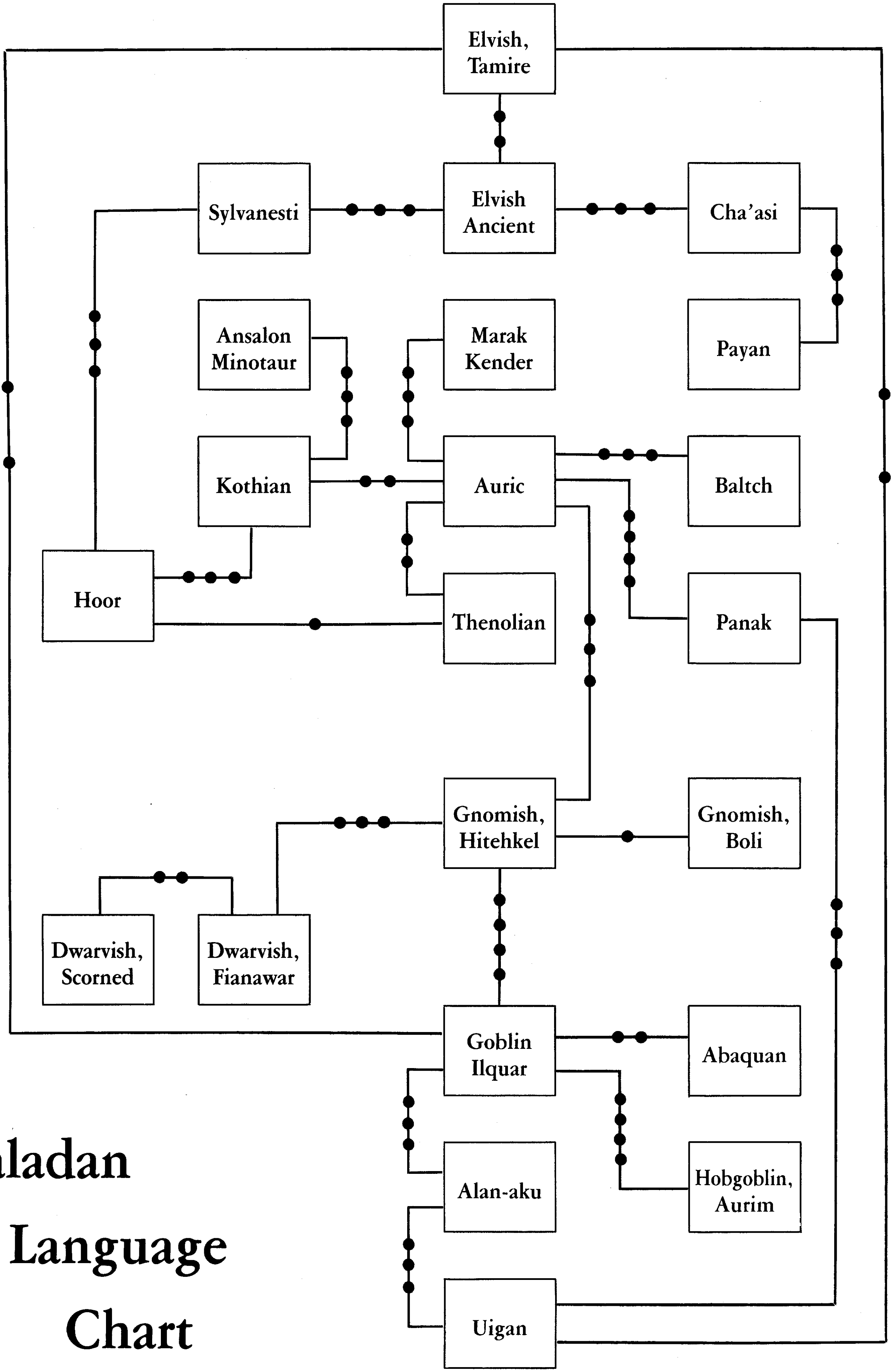
You should use the final percentage as a guide to role-playing. A speaker with 80% fluency (such as a Hitehkel gnome talking to a Boli gnome) hesitates from time to time, trying to think of the right word. Characters with 50% fluency (a man from the Rainward Isles talking to a warrior of the Ice People) have to resort to pantomime and occasional long-winded explanations using simple concepts. Speakers with a 30% fluency (a Marak kender talking with a citizen of Kristophan) can get across basic concepts but have to use gestures to help even with these. Characters with 10% fluency (a Payan Islander relying on his few elvish words to talk to one of the Hulderfolk) are limited to a word here and there combined with a lot of hand-waving and bad mime.

When using the Taladan Language Chart, it is important to remember that it (and all languages) are only a tool for your role-playing game. You may find times when you need to bend the rules somewhat. Consider first the effect not knowing (or knowing) a language will have on play. If the player characters have to waste a lot of time trying to communicate with an NPC, then it's better to have the NPC conveniently know the PCs' language. If the situation would be made more interesting by a lack of communication, then the NPC doesn't know the language—unless, of course, that would be ridiculous.

In all cases, player characters should have a common language. There is nothing more frustrating than a party of player characters who cannot even communicate with each other.



Taladan Language Chart



Cha'asi mages are practitioners of an ancient and nearly forgotten type of magic, one that defies the "accepted" understanding of schools of magic. According to the writings of all the known theorists, cha'asi magic should be impossible. The cha'asi have never delved greatly into theory and so have no clue that what they are doing is impossible. Oddly enough, it seems to work for them perfectly well.

Cha'asi magic is built on an intuitive understanding of nature. The wizards are specialists and gain the benefits accordingly. But their spell selection does not follow the normal arrangement of schools. Instead, they specialize in spells that affect nature and sometimes the elements. They can learn some spells outside of this area, but certain spells-especially ones that create mechanical and unnatural results-are denied to them. The spells in their school and those disallowed are given on the Cha'asi Spell Table.

Aside from their spell selection, cha'asi mages also have a distinctly different approach to magical item creation. Most mages fashion an item and then imbue it with some chosen power, defining what the item will do by what they put into it.

Cha'asi believe that all things—mineral, plant, or animal-contain magical power. Sometimes the power is great, sometimes it is negligible. The power may have a useful, constructive effect or may possess an odd and pointless effect. It is not their business to choose the power-that is determined by the nature of the thing. Generally, the magical power of a thing reflects its nature. Thus, a stone may have some power associated with strength, hardness, or force; a medicinal herb may relate to healing; a water-smoothed stone may give speed or slipperiness. Although the mage may have some general idea of the power, he can never be certain until it manifests itself.

Cha'asi mages produce magical items by drawing the innate power out of an item. Thus the Cha'asi way of creating magical items is slightly different. First, cha'asi attempt to use items in as natural a state as possible. The less carving, whittling, and shaping that is done, the better. Second, the item must be as artistically pure as possible. The perfect form of a stone contains more potential power than just an ordinary rock.

There must also be some connection between the item and the power desired. Thus, a lightning-struck branch might be suitable for a *wand of lightning bolts,* but would be unsuitable for a *wand of flame extinguishing.* It takes skill and wisdom to select the proper raw materials for a desired item. A check against artistic ability must be made secretly by the DM when selecting the piece to be used for a magical item. If the check is failed, the magical item is flawed.

Finally, the wizard does not cast spells into the item. Instead he must use the *enchant an item* spell to bring out its power. If this is successful, the DM determines what the item becomes, based on the success of the saving throw for the item. The greater the difference between the number needed to save and the actual saving throw, the better or more powerful the item. If the saving throw is successful, the character has 24 hours to determine just what magical power is manifested in the item, either by trial and error or magical spells.



NATURAL SCHOOL SPELLS

First Level
Affect Normal Fires
Burning Hands
Change Self
Dancing Lights
Find Familiar
Light
Mending
Spider Climb
Wall of Fog

Second Level
Alter Self
Continual Light
Darkness, 15' Radius
Fog Cloud
Fool's Gold
Glitterdust
Summon Swarm
Whispering Wind

Third Level
Gust of Wind
Protection from Normal Missiles
Water Breathing
Wind Wall

Fourth Level
Fire Charm
Fire Shield
Hallucinatory Terrain
Massmorph
Plant Growth
Polymorph Other
Polymorph Self
Solid Fog
Wall of Fire

Fifth Level
Airy Water
Animal Growth
Cone of Cold
Distance Distortion
Hold Monster
Stone Shape
Transmute Rock to Mud
Wall of Stone

Sixth Level
Chain Lightning
Conjure Animals
Control Weather
Death Fog
Lower Water
Move Earth
Part Water
Transmute Water to Dust

Seventh Level
Charm Plants
Reverse Gravity
Shadow Walk

Eighth Level
Incendiary Cloud
Mass Charm
Polymorph Any Object

Ninth Level
Crystalbrittle
Shape Change

SPELLS NOT AVAILABLE TO CHA'ASI WIZARDS

First Level
Alarm
Armor
Erase
Nystul's Magic Aura
Tenser's Floating Disc
Wizard Mark

Second Level
Deeppockets
Knock
Magic Mouth
Melfs Acid Arrow
Wizard Lock

Third Level
Explosive Run es
Illusionary Script
Item
Leomund's Tiny Hut
Non-Detection
Sepia Snake Sigil
Vampiric Touch

Fourth Level
Contagion
Leomund's Secure Shelter
Minor Creation
Minor Globe of Invulnerability

Fifth Level
Fabricate
Leomund's Secret Chest
Major Creation

Sixth Level
Anti-Magic Shell
Contingency
Guards and Wards
Programmed Illusion

Seventh Level
Control Undead
Forcecage
Mordenkainen's Magnificent Mansion
Mordenkainen's Sword
Simulacrum
Statue

Eighth Level
Clone
Symbol
Trap the Soul

Ninth Level
Imprisonment
Mordenkainen's Disjunction
Succor

THE ARMIES OF TALADAS

Taladas, like Ansalon, is a region wracked by warfare. Dragonarmies, Imperial legions, Thenolite companies, Uigan hordes, and goblin raiding parties are locked in combat, to-and-fro. Role-playing in such a world means the characters will, from time to time, interact with troops, wander through battlefields, and even play the roles of commanders. But to do this, you need game information that describes the organization and structure of the different forces.

This section is intended for use with the AD&D® 2nd Edition BATTLESYSTEM™ rules. While much of this is useful for role-playing situations, particularly the chains of command and the composition of units, most of the information is written with the BATTLESYSTEM rules in mind, particularly the specific unit rosters.

The BATTLESYSTEM rules are for fighting large battles within the AD&D game. These battles use miniature figures, often painted, that are organized into army units. The information in this book describes how the units of the major land armies of Taladas are organized and gives the relevant information for different units. The color plates that come with this box set show examples of uniforms, arms, and armor for typical soldiers of the different armies. These plates can be used as guides for painting your own Taladan armies.

THE UIGAN HORDE

The largest force in Northern Hosk, the Uigan horde is organized around a single arm-the cavalry. Contrary to their image as simple barbarians, the Uigan have a highly organized army chain of command. The diagram on page 33 shows the structure.

The supreme commander of the army is the boyla of the Uigan. He has a private bodyguard of 2,000 men, all elite troops. He commands the army, which is divided into three sides: a right, center, and left.

Each side is commanded by a tegin boyla (a prince from one of the boyla families). The size of a side depends on the number of ordus attached to it. An ordu is the basic building block of the army, approximately 2,000 men. It is commanded by a tegin (prince), elected by the family clans that form the ordu. There are three to four regiments to an ordu (500 to 650 men each) and these regiments are divided into family clans. A single clan may send 50 to 500 men, depending on its size. Clans always serve in the same groups. Over the years the different ordu have developed long-standing rivalries and friendships based on clan relationships.

In addition to these forces, the Uigan have a small number of specialist troops. These include auxiliary infantry (most often Alan-Atu mercenaries) and two regiments of artillerists and engineers for complicated siege work. These men come from any clan.

The Uigan do not use much magic in battle. There are no separate units of wizards and priests. Instead, these men are personal advisors to the boyla and tegin, and are under their direct command.

The composition of a typical side is as follows:

Auxiliary light infantry	10%
Uigan light cavalry	40%
Uigan medium cavalry	30%
Uigan noble cavalry	20%

THE ELF CLANS ARMY

In general, the Elf Clans have no overall organization or army. Each clan fields its own unit, the size of the unit depending on the size of the clan. Average clan size ranges from 50 to 200 warriors, led by a war chief, elected by the elders of the clan.

When faced by a threat larger than can be dealt with individually, different clans band together, always along the lines of ancient loyalties. Thus, the Tiger Clan and Bear Clan may join together as a single unit, but a warrior of the Tiger Clan would never serve in the same unit as one of the Snake Clan. One War Speaker is chosen from the war chiefs of the different clans.

Although it is extremely rare, there have been occasions when the entire Elf Clan nation has united against a single threat. In this case, the different clans form into the larger units described above and the War Speakers elect a Great Leader from their ranks. This elf's job is often less military than political, for not only must he lead the army in battle, but he must also control his hot-tempered kinsmen, suppressing feuds and disagreements.

The composition of an Elf Clan army is similar to that of the Uigan. However, the elves favor more light cavalry than heavy armored troops and they do not make use of auxiliary mercenaries. Because they are more magically inclined, they can field special units of fighter/ mages. Due to the peculiarities of their culture, these units are almost entirely female.

Light elf cavalry	60%
Light elf female (fighter/mage) cavalry	10%
Scouts (rangers)	5%
Medium elf cavalry	15%
Heavy elf cavalry	10%

THE ILQUAR GOBLINS

Although violent, aggressive, and brutal, the goblins have never fielded or raised a substantial army, as the organization and cooperation needed are rare among their kind. This has resulted in most of their attacks being made by small raiding parties. Organized forces are typically intended for defense-garrisons, militia, and bodyguards. They mostly rely on walls, missile weapons, and dirty tricks to ensure their safety.

The goblins have never yet massed into a large army, although it might be possible under a ruthless and cunning leader, goblin or otherwise. The largest forces they have fielded are the garrisons drawn from several towns that fall under the rule of a single chieftain. Average force sizes range from 100 to 300 warriors per vil-



lage. While these forces are not large, the goblins know their local territory and use this knowledge to make effective use of ambushes and traps.

The goblin forces are oriented toward defense and their composition reflects this. Given their nature, they do not make use of mercenaries. Their shamans, jealous of their power, will aid only those commanders who can offer them something in return.

Goblin light infantry	50%
Goblin archers	20%
Goblin heavy infantry	10%
Goblin medium infantry	20%

THE LEGIONS OF THE LEAGUE

No army in all of Taladas is more organized or disciplined than that of the Minotaur League, and no army has a larger bureaucratic structure. In addition to the standard forces, the Imperial army maintains forces few other countries provide-specialized siege engineers, a quartermaster corps, and medical troops.

The minotaurs have divided the command structure into political and military commands. The political command has overall control of the army in both peace and war. It is through the political command that funds are allocated, high-level promotions occur, and strategic decisions are made. Most high-rank military commanders are also involved (to one extent or the other) in the political command structure.

The military command mostly affects the handling of the army in the field when it is actually on campaign and sees to training and readiness when it is not. Military commanders include the generals of the army and the commanders of the legions. These men make the actual tactical decisions in the field and are ultimately held responsible for the success or failure of any battle or campaign. It is common for military commanders to hold, or to aspire to, some level of political command, since this is often the only way to protect themselves from treachery.

The League Command Chart (on page 33) shows the different levels and relationships of the two types of command in the army. At the apex is the Emperor, who naturally has military and political authority. The Empress has varying degrees of influence over her husband, depending on the situation, her connections, and her charms. The Emperor appoints military governors, ministers, the General of the Army, and the commander of his bodyguard. He also presides over the Senate.

The military governors rule in those territories at war or in revolt. They exercise martial law and can command any armies that operate within their borders. Not surprisingly, there is little love lost between the military governors and the provincial governors they often supplant.

The Minister of State coordinates the diplomatic efforts of the Empire and supposedly sees to the welfare of the people. Good ministers keep the populace contented. Bad ones rouse the people to rebellion.

The Senate is supposed to govern the people in peacetime, but for the most part it rubber-stamps the Emperor's edicts. It also coordinates the activities of the different ministries. Political maneuvering can result in more or less funding for a favored general, a desirable promotion, or banishment to a distant post.

The Minister of Finance collects the taxes and allocates the funds of the Empire. He can easily make money appear or disappear for his favorite soldiers.

The General of the Army commands all the troops of the Empire, regardless of their location. He battles with the Senate (and the Emperor), prepares plans to carry out the Emperor's orders, and approves high-level promotions.

The commander of the bodyguard (the Black Cloaks) answers only to the Emperor and receives his funds from the Emperor's private treasury. The Black Cloaks are in every respect a private army.

The General Quartermaster is responsible for all funds issued to the army, a post that gives him great power. Commanders who get on his bad side find their troops ill-supplied and starving in the field.

The most commonly used unit in the League army is the legion. The standard legion contains about 1,200 men but can be swelled up to as many as 5,000. A legion is divided into *ordines,* each of which has 500 men, further divided into five units called *centuria.*

A legion typically has the following types of soldiers:

Medium infantry	30%
Light archers or slingers	25%
Heavy infantry	20%
Light infantry	25%

Supplementing the legions are specialized troops of cavalry and auxiliaries. While these are sometimes attached to the legion, they are more often treated as separate units. The cavalry are organized into *vexillationes* of about 500 to 600 men. Like the infantry, the vexillatione is divided into ordines, although these are only 200 men strong. Each ordine has two centuria of 100 men.

A typical vexillatione has the following types of riders:

Light cavalry	50%
Medium cavalry	30%
Heavy cavalry	20%

The League army makes some use of auxiliary troops, barbarians recruited into service. These are formed into *auxilia* of about 500 men. These are built solely from centuriae of 100 men each.

The auxilia are organized as follows:

Light archers or slingers	60%
Light infantry	40%

Some auxilium are composed entirely of missile troops, however.

Finally, the army also maintains two *legions ballistariorum,* specialized troops equipped with catapults and siege weapons. These legions have 1,000 men and approximately 50 pieces of artillery each. Most of these are ballistae, supplemented by light catapults. In addition, each walled city has a separate unit of artillerists (and equipment) for the defense of the city.

THE THENOLITE ARMY

The main adversary of the League is the Kingdom of Thenol. While nominally under the control of the King, the army actually follows the commands of Bishop Trandamere, the leader of the Temple of Hith.

Under the direct command of the Bishop are the undead. These are organized into units of 250 each, all skeletons and zombies. They are led by priests of Hith. The priests do not tend to be skillful commanders nor do the undead deal well with complex maneuvers. The majority of undead forces are light infantry. Only a few units (led by skillful commanders) are able to use missile weapons. What the undead lack in finesse, however, they make up for in mass and utter mindless fearlessness.

The fanatics are an ill-organized mob. The size of any group can range from as few as 50 to thousands. They follow the urgings of the prophets, but are virtually leaderless once committed to battle. The fanatics are always light infantry and completely lack the discipline needed to use missile weapons. The fanatics, however, pay little heed to losses, convinced that their cause is just.

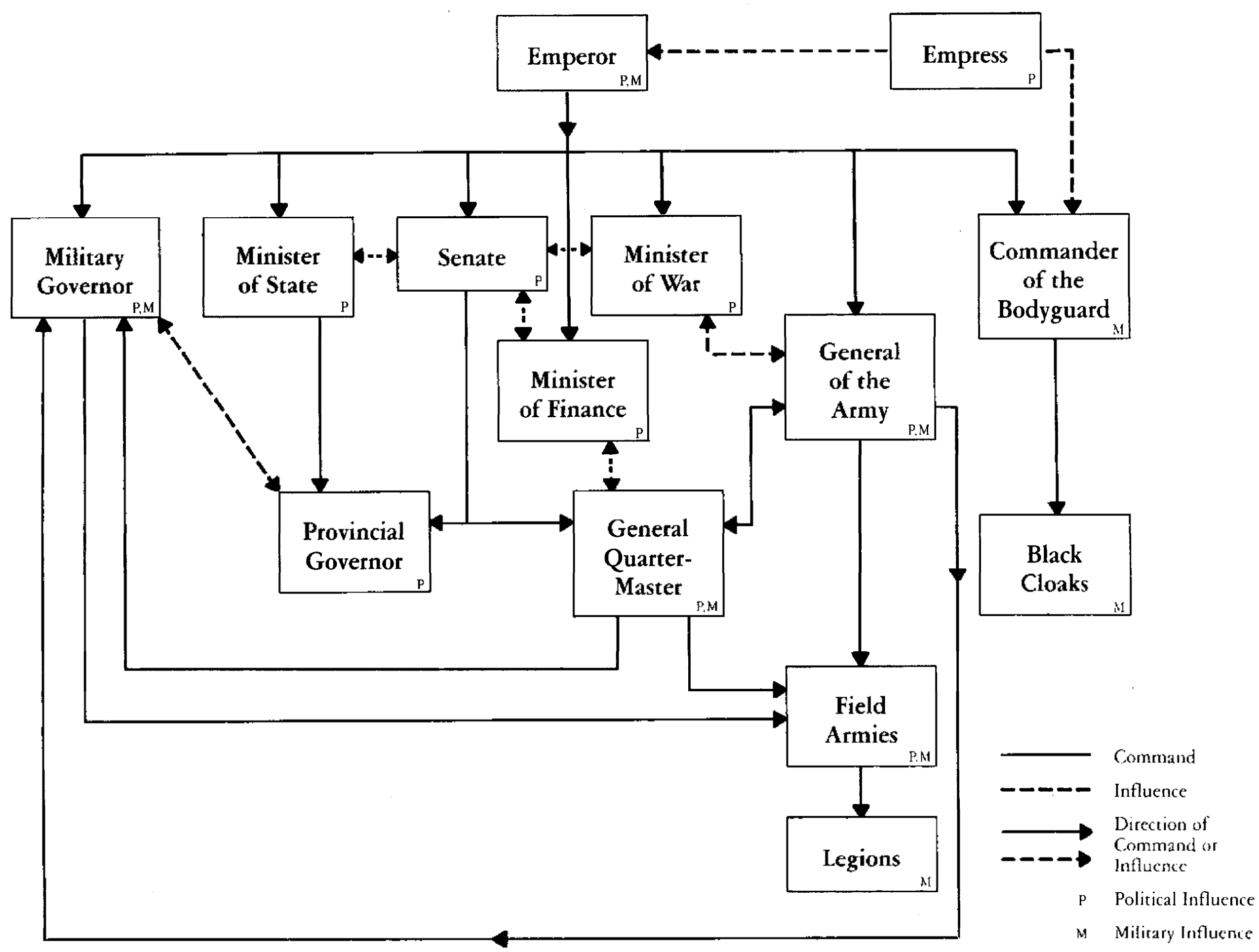
The Companies of the Lords form the backbone of the army. These units range in quality. There are common militia called up to serve in the feudal levy, expensive and arrogant knights, and seasoned and tough experienced campaigners. The type of troops and their quality vary according to the means and inclination of the lord providing the troops. The size of units varies also, but the average is 150 to 300 infantrymen or 100 to 200 cavalrymen.

In the field, the army is formed by an amalgamation of units. There is seldom a supreme commander. Instead, the command is handled by a council composed of the leading priest (in charge of the undead), one or more of the prophets (depending on their persuasiveness), and one or more lords (depending on how many factions are present). Each of these functions as an independent command, sometimes working in harmony but more often not.

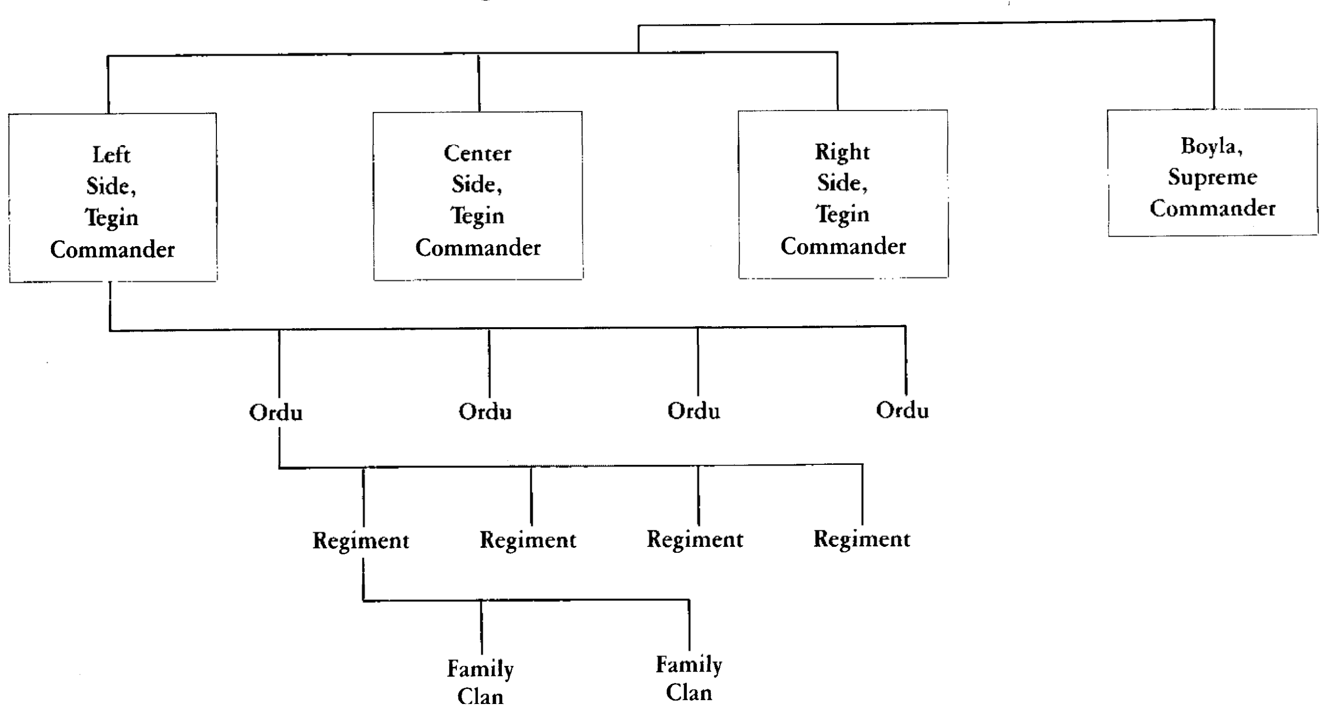
The typical Thenolian field army has the following breakdown of troops:

Undead light infantry	10%
Undead archers	5%
Fanatic light infantry	10%
Militia	10%
Light crossbowmen	5%
Light archers	5%
Heavy infantry	20%
Light cavalry	10%
Medium cavalry	20%
Heavy cavalry	5%

Imperial Command Structure



Uigan Horde Diagram



UIGAN AUXILIARIES

Irregular Light Infantry

AR	8
Hits	1
MV	12″
ML	11

Notes
Long sword, leather & shield.

Lone sword 6/8

Range
/ /

ELF CLAN WARRIORS

Irregular Light Cavalry

AR	9
Hits	2
MV	24″
ML	14

Notes
Increase all AD by one when berserk.

Lt. lance [8]
Long sword 8/10
Short bow 6*

Range
5/10/15

UIGAN WARRIORS

Regular Light Cavalry

AR	9
Hits	2
MV	24″
ML	14

Lt. lance [8]
Long sword 8/ 10
Short bow 6*

Range
5/10/15

FEMALE WARBAND

Irregular Light Elf Cavalry

AR	9
Hits	2
MV	24″
ML	15

Notes
Increase all AD by one when berserk. Able to cast one 1st level wizard spell.

Lt. lance [8]
Long sword 8/ 10
Short bow 6*

Range
5/10/15

UIGAN KNIGHTS

Regular Medium Cavalry

AR	8
Hits	2
MV	18″
ML	14

Med. lance [10]
Long sword 10
Short bow 6*

Range
5/10/15

ELF CLAN NOBLES

Regular Medium Cavalry

AR	8
Hits	2
MV	18″
ML	15

Notes
Increase all AD by one when berserk.

Med. lance [10]
Long sword 10
Short bow 6*

Range
5/10/15

UIGAN NOBLES

Elite Heavy Cavalry

AR	7
Hits	2
MV	15″
ML	15

Med. lance [10/12]
Long; sword 10
Short bow 6″

Range
5/10/15

TIGER CLAN ELVES

Elite Heavy Cavalry

AR	6
Hits	2
MV	15″
ML	16

Notes
Increase all AD by one when berserk.

Hvy. lance [10/12]
Long sword 10
Short bow 6*

Range
5/10/15

STEEL HAMMER ORDU

Regular Dwarven Medium Infantry

AR	7
Hits	1
MV	6″
ML	13

Notes
Favored terrain: rough

Battle axe 6
Warhammer 6/4

Range
/ /

XXVII (GRAYWOOD) ORDU

Regular Light Elf Archers

AR	9
Hits	1
MV	12″
ML	14

Notes
Move through woods at no penalty.

Long sword 6/8

Range
4/8/17

XII (GLADIUS) ORDU

Regular Medium Infantry

AR	7
Hits	1
MV	9″
ML	12

Spear 6*
Lone sword 6/8

Range
1/2/3

BROKEN HORN ORDU

Elite Heavy Minotaurs

AR	6
Hits	3
MV	12″
ML	16

Notes
+ 3 morale bonus is gained when in contact with enemy.

Long sword 12

Range
/ /

GREENSPEAR ORDU

Regular Elf Medium Infantry

AR	7
Hits	1
MV	12″
ML	13

Notes
Move through woods at no penalty.

Spear 6*
Long sword 6

Range
1/2/3

OAK ORDU

Irregular Light Elf Infantry

AR	8
Hits	1
MV	12″
ML	12

Notes
Move through woods at no penalty.

Spear 6*
Long sword 6

Range
1/2/3

LEORMAN'S ORDU

Regular Light Slingers

AR	9
Hits	1
MV	12″
ML	13

Sling 4*/6*
Dagger 4

Range
5/10/20

V (PENAL) ORDU

Regular Light Infantry

AR	8
Hits	1
MV	12″
ML	10

Notes
Composed of convicted criminals.

Spear 6*
Long sword 6/8

Range
1/2/3

WHITE HORSE ORDU

Regular Light Cavalry

AR	9
Hits	2
MV	24″
ML	13

Lt. lance [8]
Long sword 8/10

Range
/ /

WOOD PEOPLE AUXILIARIES

Irregular Elf Light Archers

AR	9
Hits	1
MV	12″
ML	13

Notes
Unaffected by forest.

Lone: bow 6*
Long sword 6/8

Range
4/8/17

CLANSMEN ORDU

Irregular Elf Light Cavalry

AR	9
Hits	2
MV	24″
ML	13

Lt. lance [8]
Long sword 8/10
Short bow 6*

Range
5/10/15

MARAKIAN AUXILIARIES

Irregular Kender Stone bows

AR	9
Hits	1
MV	12″
ML	12

Stonebow 4*/6*
Dagger 4

Range
/ /

LANDSMEN ORDU

Regular Medium Cavalry

AR	7
Hits	2
MV	18″
ML	13

Med. lance [10]
Long sword 10

Range
/ /

BASHI-BARAS

Irregular Light Infantry

AR	10
Hits	1
MV	12″
ML	10

Spear 6*
Short sword 6

Range
1/2/3

XVI (THERAN) ORDU

Elite Heavy Cavalry

AR	5
Hits	2
MV	15″
ML	15

Hvy. lance [10/12]
Long sword 10

Range
/ /

IMPERIAL ENGINEERS

Regular Dwarf Light Infantry

AR	10
Hits	1
MV	6″
ML	12

Notes
All are skilled in siegecraft and mining. Favored terrain: rough

Battle axe 6
Warhammer 6*/4*

Range
1/2/3

SERVANTS OF HITH

Undead Infantry

AR	8
Hits	1
MV	12″
ML	-

Notes
Never check morale. Half damage from edged weapons.

Assorted weapons 6

Range
/ /

LORD ALRIC'S COMPANY

Regular Light Crossbowmen

AR	8
Hits	1
MV	12″
ML	13

Lt. crossbow 4*
Short sword 6

Range
6/12/17

SERVANTS OF HITH

Undead Archers

AR	8
Hits	1
MV	12″
ML	-

Notes
Never check morale. Half damage from edged weapons. Cannot perform pass- through fire.

Short bow 6*
Assorted weapons 6

Range
5/10/15

VIDAME ROTROU'S COMPANY

Regular Light Archers

AR	8
Hits	1
MV	12″
ML	13

Long bow 6*
Short sword 6

Range
4/8/17

FANATICS OF HITH

Irregular Light Infantry

AR	10
Hits	1
MV	12″
ML	11

Spear 6
Short sword 6

Range
/ /

LORD DAMIN'S COMPANY

Regular Heavy Infantry

AR	6
Hits	2
MV	6″
ML	13

Notes
3rd level fighters.

Spear 6*
Long sword 8/10

Range
1/2/3

THENOLIAN MILITIA

Irregular Light Infantry

AR	9
Hits	1
MV	12″
ML	11

Glaive 6/8

Range
/ /

DRAGONMEN

Irregular Bakali Infantry

AR	7
Hits	2
MV	6″
ML	14

Notes
Favored terrain: swamp

Natural weapons 8

Range
/ /

LORD VIGARD'S SCOUTS

Regular Light Cavalry

AR	8
Hits	2
MV	24″
ML	14

Lt. lance [8]
Long sword 8/10
Javelin 6*
Range
2/4/6

HUNTERS

Irregular Goblin Archers

AR	9
Hits	1
MV	6″
ML	11

Short bow 6*
Dagger 4
Range
5/10/15

SQUIRES OF THE LORDS

Regular Medium Cavalry

AR	7
Hits	2
MV	18″
ML	13

Med. lance [10]
H. mace 10
Range
/ /

WARBAND

Regular Goblin Medium Infantry

AR	7
Hits	1
MV	6″
ML	11

Short sword 6

KNIGHTS OF THE REALM

Elite Heavy Cavalry

AR	5
Hits	3
MV	15″
ML	15

Notes
5th level fighters.

Hvy. lance [12/12+8]

CHIEFTAIN'S BODYGUARD

Regular Goblin Heavy Infantry

AR	6
Hits	1
MV	6″
ML	12

Short sword 6
Range
/ /

AR	-
Hits	-
MV	-
ML	-

Notes

Range
/ /

GOBLIN HORDE

Irregular Goblin Infantry

AR	8
Hits	1
MV	6″
ML	10

Broadsword 6
Range
/ /

The Gods of Taladas

Although the people of Taladas are vastly different from those of Ansalon, they still know and worship the same gods of Krynn—or almost. Known by different names and sometimes even different gender, the Taladans have reached their own understanding of the gods, in some ways familiar to Ansalonians and in other ways quite different.

Taladans agree with Ansalonians on the number of gods. But their general groupings are quite different. There are the gods of good, neutrality, and evil. In addition, there are three others in Taladas—the spirits of magic, the supreme forces, and the gods of dwarves and minotaurs. The particular cause espoused by the god (good, evil, neutral, etc.) depends on the believer's viewpoint. Likewise the gods are known by non-Ansalonian names, sometimes even several names. The listing below describes the different gods and their commonly perceived roles.

The supreme forces are not considered gods proper, but rather energies beyond the comprehension of anything. These include the Highfather, Paladine, and Majere.

Highfather is revered by the Glass Sailors as the Highgod, the supreme being. All other deities are merely false idols or manifestations of his supreme power.

Paladine is thought of as an abstract force. He is benign, above good and evil.

Majere is considered the female anima of Paladin. No images exist of Paladin or Majere.

The foremost gods of good in Taladas are Kiri-Jolith and Mishakal, known as Qu'uan the Warrior and Mislaxa to the Uigan. He is often shown as a fierce warrior; she as a stranger in robes.

Two remaining good gods complement the pair. Habbakuk is little known, venerated primarily by the Silvanaes as the Sea Lord and less so by the minotaurs as Han-Yagas. Branchala is almost unknown to the Taladans, who usually view this deity as an avatar of Habbakuk. Thus, Branchala has no priests in Taladas.

The gods of neutrality are seldom worshiped in Taladas, since their roles are less active than those of good and evil. Gilean is known only to an educated few, thus his cult is limited to the cities and settled lands. Zivilyn is considered to be only an aspect of Gilean and has no worshipers in Taladas. Sirrion tends to be venerated by the dwarves and gnomes. Shinare is given special esteem by the merchants of the Minotaur League. Conversely, this god is all but unknown in the more barbaric regions of Taladas. Of all the neutral gods, Chislev is the most actively worshiped, particularly by the Uigan. This goddess is considered by many to be the spirit of nature.

The evil gods also exercise great power in Taladas, in the lands of Thenol in particular. Although Takhisis is recognized as the most powerful, she is held in fear by even those who would follow her. She is portrayed as capricious and willful, dangerous to deal with. By far more popular (at least as the popularity of evil gods goes) is Hiddukel. Among the evil denizens of Taladas, he has the greatest influence. Chemosh, the Undead Lord, is not worshiped, but feared, as is Morgion, the god of disease. Zeboim is virtually unknown among the Taladans.

In addition to the gods of good, neutrality, and evil, there are a number of gods that the Taladans place in special classifications. These include Reorx (the god of gnomes and dwarves) and Sargonnas (god of the minotaurs).

Finally, the three moons of Krynn—Solinari, Lunitari, and Nuitari—are not considered gods proper. They are revered as elemental forces of great power, but have no worshipers or priests of their own.



Disir

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Subterranean
FREQUENCY:	Very Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Tribal
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Omnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Highly (13-14)
TREASURE:	(B)
ALIGNMENT:	Lawful evil

NO. APPEARING:	2d4 (2d4)
ARMOR CLASS:	3
MOVEMENT:	12
HIT DICE:	5
THAC0:	15
NO. OF ATTACKS:	
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	2d4/2d4/2d6
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Pain
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Fire resistance
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (6'-7' tall)
MORALE:	15
XP VALUE:	975



The disir are a race of deep-dwelling subterranean creatures of disgusting appearance. They stand about six to seven feet tall, although they are normally hunched over to a lesser height. Parts of their bodies are covered with a natural armor, while other areas show exposed rubbery flesh. Their skin tone is a pasty green-white. Their pores exude a thick coating of slimy gel. This is normally polluted with dirt, debris, and bits of dead flesh that seem to constantly slough off them. An aura of stench and decay hangs around them.

Combat: Disir usually fight with claws and bite, but they have been known to use weapons on rare occasions. Although their bite is more effective, disir prefer to fight with their claws whenever possible, saving their bite attack for helpless or nearly helpless victims. The claws are long and powerful and the disir are able to easily crush soft stones with one hand. Their bite is particularly vicious, both for their protruding jagged fangs and their long, razor-sharp, rasp-like tongue. This is used to shear flesh from bone.

All the attacks of the disir (claws and bite) are poisonous, due to the slimy jelly that drips from their bodies. This jelly causes intense pain to (but does not kill) its victims. Those struck by a disir must roll a saving throw vs. poison at the end of the round. Only one saving throw need be made, regardless of the number of times the character has been hit. Each claw causes a -1 penalty to the saving throw, while a bite gives a -2 penalty. These modifiers are cumulative, so if a character is struck by all three attacks, he would have a total penalty of -4 to his saving throw.

If the saving throw is failed, the poison generates a burning fire, starting from the point of the wound. This pain is so intense that it numbs the muscles and gradually paralyzes the victim. The process takes 1d4 + 1 rounds. Each round until the character is paralyzed, he suffers a -1 (cumulative) penalty to his THAC0. This penalty is removed when the pain is neutralized. The poison has a duration of 1d4 turns. The poisonous gel has a very short life when exposed to air. It is effective on the disir because their bodies are constantly renewing it. However, it cannot be bottled or kept and used by others.

The gel also provides protection from fire-based attacks. Disir gain a +4 saving throw bonus and suffer 1 point less per die of damage from fire-based attacks.

Habitat/Society: The disir are a secretive group, due in part to geographic location (miles beneath the earth) and a fanatical hatred of anything that might be their neighbor. Their homeland is deep under the earth in the realm of the Underdark. There, they fashion underground tunnels or, more often, appropriate the homes of others. Thus they are a scourge to dwarves and other tunneling races. Wars between the two are often fought over the homes the dwarves have built.

The disir live in large tribal units of 50 or more members. The tribes, in turn, maintain close relations with each other and several tribes may be located in a limited area. Warfare between different tribes is unknown. They are not so scrupulous about other neighbors, viewing any other settlement as a source of food. Although highly intelligent, they do not enter into treaties or truces of any kind.

The disir reproduce from eggs. There are no distinguishing signs of their sex, making it impossible to tell male from female by sight. Indeed, a single disir may be either male or female, depending on what stage of life it is in. The females of their kind (or those in the female phase) dominate the males.

The tribes live communally, sharing the duties between all the adult members. The eggs are laid in incubator halls and are guarded at all times. Food gathering and raiding is done in groups and the spoils of each are brought back to the tribe and divided among all the members. Those who cannot assist in these tasks, for whatever reason, are killed.

Ecology: The disir, while omnivorous, greatly favor meat-of any kind. They seem untroubled by spoilage, decay, or source. They eat anything they can kill or any dead they find. They resort to vegetable matter (mostly fungus) only when other resources have dried up. Thus, they often serve to scour old, over-populated sections of the Underdark, leaving behind sterile dead remains.

Draconian, Traag

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Temperate plain or forest
FREQUENCY:	Very Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Tribal
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Night
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Low (5-7)
TREASURE:	None
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic evil

NO. APPEARING:	2d6
ARMOR CLASS:	4
MOVEMENT:	6
HIT DICE:	3
THAC0:	17
NO. OF ATTACKS:	2 or 1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d61 1d6 or by weapon
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	None
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	None
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (5′-6′ tall)
MORALE:	Special
XP VALUE:	120
Chieftain	175



The traag draconians are among the first failed attempts to create draconians, a precursor of the more successful baaz. While not overly tall, they are emaciated and gangly. They have sharp taloned hands, and crocodile-like snouts. Their bodies are covered with rough scales of a metallic brass color, a link to their heritage.

Combat: Traag draconians are fierce fighters, adept with either weapons or their natural talons. At the same time, they are not naturally courageous, being extremely conscious, even paranoid, of their own weaknesses and numbers. They do not attack unless the odds are in their favor, either through numbers, the element of surprise or clever strategies, or if they have been forced into battle. Thus, their initial morale is only 8.

Once the battle is joined, however, the traag become maniacally fearless. A blood-lust seizes them and they no longer need to check morale for the duration of the fight. They will fight without regard for losses and gain a + 1 on all saving throws vs. spells that cause fear (scare, fear, etc.). This effect only comes into play when the combat is actually joined. Since the traag don't use missile weapons, this is when hand-to-hand combat is conducted.

In combat, the traag often disdain the use of weapons and fight with their claws, which are effective enough. They use weapons when there is some advantage to be gained from using the weapon—attack mode, reach, or other special use.

Upon death, the traag bubble and rot away in a single round, leaving only a slimy puddle behind.

Habitat/Society: The traag were one of the first products of the evil lords' attempts to pervert the eggs of the good dragons to create draconians. (At least, they were one of the first experiments to survive.) For a time, since they lived and were good fighters (when they fought), the lords considered them a success and bred large numbers of them.

Over time, however, the traag began to develop a number of undesirable traits that ultimately made them unsuitable for use in the dragon armies. Most obvious of these is their noteworthy cowardice. Even this alone would not have been sufficient, but coupled with a very low birth rate (each brass dragon egg yielded only a few viable traag) and a tendency to suddenly go berserk, attacking anything or anyone, made the traag a failure. Not wanting to waste time slaughtering them by the thousands, the evil lords simply disposed of their error in the lands of Aurim.

The traag have formed themselves into small tribal bands. Each tribe is led by a chieftain (5 HD, THAC0 15, Dmg 1d8/1d8). These bands of 1d100 + 50 traag live mostly in the deserted villages and cities of ancient Aurim. The more numerous and powerful hobgoblins have made the plains unsafe for their habitation, so the traag have fortified and trapped the ruins as a protection against their powerful neighbors. The old streets are honeycombed with hidden sally ports, rockfalls, dead ends, and concealed ways.

The villages are normally organized in a similar manner. At the center of the ruins is the tribal headquarters. There are always at least two paths to this and sometimes more. Fanning out from the center are different encampments, or "divisions" as the traag call them. Each division has 1d20 + 10 members. These divisions have varying responsibilities, usually assigned the duty of guarding a specific post or hunting in a given territory.

Because the traag are created, they have only one sex (male for lack of a better name). There are no young or dependents. All members of the tribe are warriors-they are more completely mobilized than any other group in Taladas. This has led them to increasing dominance in Aurim.

Ecology: Although carnivorous, the traag are often reduced to scavenging. Unwilling to hunt for great lengths of time on the plains, they are almost universally under-nourished. It's not surprising then that they will eat virtually anything (even hobgoblin) that is put in front of them.

Fire Minion

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Volcanic, lava
FREQUENCY:	Very Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Hierarchial
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Special
INTELLIGENCE:	Average to genius (11- 18)
TREASURE:	None
ALIGNMENT:	Lawful evil

NO. APPEARING:	1-4
ARMOR CLASS:	3
MOVEMENT:	12
HIT DICE:	6
THAC0:	15
NO. OF ATTACKS:	
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	2d6
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Fire
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Immunity to fire
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	L (7'-9')
MORALE:	15
XP VALUE:	975



Fire minions are fearsome creatures, apparently from the elemental plane of Fire. Their bodies are composed of living flame, and although they can assume any form they wish, the most common is that of a large humanoid, complete with fangs and horns. Their bodies are the colors of flame and constantly swirl and flicker with the living light.

Combat: Fire minions are powerful warriors, fortunately (for their enemies) limited by their environment from spreading and conquering. They attack by rising up out of fire, assuming their form in the process. Since this takes one round, it normally provides sufficient warning to the victim and only allows the normal chance of surprise. However, a fire minion can also return back into the flame (in one round), move to another location and reappear during the next round. While this does not provide any specific combat bonus, it can be unnerving to inexperienced opponents.

Fire minions normally wield large swords. Whatever the weapon used, the creature causes 2d6 points of damage. In addition, the creature has a constant flame aura that causes 1d6 points of damage to all within five feet unless protected from fire in some way. No attack roll is needed to hit and no saving throw is allowed to avoid this aura damage.

Because they are made from living flame, fire minions are completely immune to fire-based attacks. Indeed, magical flames (fireballs and dragon fire) restore hit points equal to the damage the attack would normally cause. Although they would seem to be highly vulnerable to water-based attacks, their intense heat protects them somewhat. They suffer 1 extra point of damage per die from water-based attacks. They are extremely vulnerable to cold-based attacks and suffer double the normal damage from these (although saving throws still apply). In addition, any water- or cold- based attack halves the length the time the fire minion can stay out of its fiery home.

Habitat/Society: Little is known of the fire minions' lives, simply because their natural environment precludes most observation by outsiders. It is certain they come from the elemental plane of Fire, and are considered free-willed fire elementals. Their life habits there are unknown.

Fire minions have a limited ability to gate themselves to the Prime Material plane. Such gating can be accomplished only in areas of intense flame-most commonly the cauldrons of volcanoes. Normal fires are not sufficient to allow gating and so fire minions tend to appear only in exotic locales.

Fire, flame, and lava are the natural homes of fire minions, and they dwell within them with no ill effects. They can travel through these materials as easily as walking. However, they have only a limited ability to leave the flames and risk injury or death when they do so. A fire minion will not feel the effects for 1d6 hours. After this time they lose their flame aura ability. In another 1d6 hours, the minion begins to take damage at the rate of 1-2 points per turn. This continues until either the minion returns to the flame (to rest and heal) or dies. Note that magical fires can heal the damage but cannot prolong the ability to move about on land.

Ecology: It is hard to know just where the fire minions fit into things, since so little is known of their lives in the plane of Fire. It is believed they eat lava or fire, although this is not confirmed. When slain, their bodies evaporate in a burst of ash, leaving very little to examine or study.

Gurik Cha'ahl

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Temperate forest
FREQUENCY:	Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Night
DIET:	Omnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Semi- (2-4)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic evil

NO. APPEARING:	1-2
ARMOR CLASS:	8
MOVEMENT:	6
HIT DICE:	2
THAC0:	19
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d6
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Surprise, camouflage
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	s (3'-4')
MORALE:	
XP VALUE:	



The gurik cha'ahl ("ghost people") are the dangerous and unpleasant offspring of the Ilquar goblins of Taladas. They are the ill-favored who, driven out of the villages, have managed to survive in the forests against the odds. They look much like normal goblins, except for some abnormality that marks them.

Combat: The ghost people are not brave warriors and are never likely to be. Their survival has been due to their stealth, cunning, and deceitfulness, not their fierce combat prowess.

Gurik cha'ahl are quite stealthy. They move silently 70% of the time and have a natural ability to use camouflage and natural terrain. There is only a 25% chance they are spotted by casual observation. This chance improves by 30% for close scrutiny and an additional 30% if the gurik cha'ahl is moving. (Thus there is a 85% chance of spotting a moving gurik cha'ahl if the character watches carefully.) While the ability to move silently applies to any type of terrain, the camouflage ability requires the presence of some concealing terrain, although it can be quite slight.

A gurik cha'ahl that moves silently imposes a -4 penalty to the party's surprise rolls. One that fails to move silently but is still unspotted causes a -2 penalty to character surprise rolls.

Once in combat, a gurik cha'ahl will try to cause as much harm as possible, or steal something useful and escape as quickly as it can. The creatures have no desire to fight it out or battle superior odds. Thus most attacks by the gurik are against lone stragglers or solitary hunters. On rare occasions several gurik will operate together as a group.

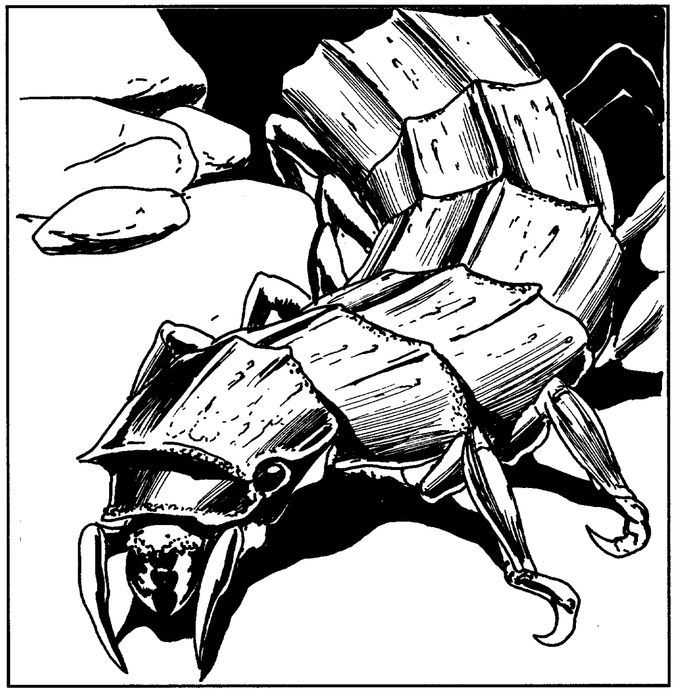
Habitat/Society: The gurik cha'ahl are solitary dwellers. Rejects of the goblin tribes who live in the Ilquar Mountains, the gurik cha'ahl have managed to survive alone in the wilderness against the odds. Some have dim memories of their childhood, but most were abandoned at too young an age to remember. Nonetheless, the similarity in appearance between themselves and the goblins has not escaped their notice. They have developed an intense hatred of the goblins and delight in causing them harm.

The gurik cha'ahl are loners, without friends or communities. Because of their natures, they do not even trust each other and classify other gurik with the goblins in general. The few times they do cooperate are when they are faced with a large incursion of goblins. Although they are spiteful and violent, their rage is directed mostly at the goblins. They attack other creatures for food and little else.

Ecology: The gurik cha'ahl act as predators and scavengers in their territory. Beyond this, their role in the local culture is strictly as a tool for mothers to scare children, a bugbear to frighten them to be good or go to sleep.

Horax

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Subterranean
FREQUENCY:	Uncommon
ORGANIZATION:	Colony
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Animal (1)
TREASURE:	Nil (D)
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	3d10
ARMOR CLASS:	3
MOVEMENT:	15
HIT DICE:	4
THAC0:	17
NO. OF ATTACKS:	
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	2d8
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	-1 initiative, crush
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (5'-6' long)
MORALE:	10
XP VALUE:	270
Young	15



The horax are insectoid creatures, as ferocious as they are mindless. They are long with 12 legs, small but powerful mandibles, and tough chitinous plates that cover the back. Horax are long and low to the ground. Their legs end in strong grippers, able to hold firmly to nearly any surface. They are very dark in color, blue-black to pure black and are not easily seen, even by those with infravision.

Combat: The horax almost always attack in packs. They rely on numbers and speed to make their kills. Although they appear short and stocky, they are surprisingly quick, making them difficult to fight. They gain a +1 bonus to their chances of being surprised and a -1 bonus to all initiative die rolls.

The horax have exceptional climbing ability and can cling and attack from almost any surface and any angle. It is not unusual to find horax packs scouring underground tunnels, some moving along the floor while others cling to the ceilings and walls. This can make them dangerous and difficult to fight for the unwary.

Horax attack with their mandibles. Though these are small, they are strong enough to crush bones. Once a horax scores a hit, it maintains its lock. Each round this lock causes 1d6 points of additional damage. No attack roll is needed for this. A horax's lock can be broken by a character (whether the attacked character or another) who spends an entire round working to dislodge the beast. The character attempting must still roll for the attack. If successful, he has pried the beast's jaws open.

Being insectoid, horax are vulnerable to cold. While ice- and cold-based attacks do not cause any additional damage, they have the effect of a slow spell. This effect lasts for 2d6 rounds.

Habitat /Society: The horax are communal creatures, living in small colonies of 30 + 1d10 individuals. There is no distinction between male and female horax. Each colony is located underground in a series of chambers. There are several communal chambers connected to a central egg chamber. Normally, there are 3d6 young among the eggs (HD 1, AC 7, Dmg 1d6). Other chambers are used to store food dragged back to the lair by the horax. These are kept for later use, preserved by the dry air of the tunnels. These chambers contain whatever treasure the horax have accidentally collected. Magical items found are most often weapons or armor from the bodies of dead warriors slain and brought back by the foragers.

Ecology: Although subterranean, the horax do venture to the surface when prey is scarce in the tunnels underground. They venture onto only the surface in the hours of dusk, after the hot desert sun has cooled, but before the chill night air makes them sluggish. Although they prefer fresh kills, they also scavenge. They do not seem to have preferences for prey, although they seldom attack other insectoid creatures.

The back plates of the horax can be fashioned into a lightweight and durable armor (AC 4) by armorers experienced at handling the stuff. The Glass Sailors of Taladas are among the best in the world at this art.

OTHLORX

The othlorx are variations of the standard dragons that appear in the world of Krynn. Physically they are identical to the existing dragon forms- brass, bronze, copper, and silver; black, blue, green, white, and red-though there are no gold othlorx. The difference is in their attitudes toward the world and other dragons.

The othlorx are part of the outcome of a choice faced by dragonkind, the choice created by Takhisis and the Wars of the Lance. When Takhisis released the evil dragons into Krynn, she expected all of her children (as she saw them) to come and fight at her side. Perhaps fortunately for the forces of good, the evil dragons were true to their natures. Not all heeded her commands. More than a few saw no gain for themselves in the battles to come, only the greater chance of death and misery. So they refused to come and fight at her side. Infuriated, Takhisis cursed these renegade dragons, causing them to become the first of the othlorx.

When the good dragons were bound by their oath to not interfere in the Wars of the Lance, they set out to search for their lost eggs. They traversed the globe, and more than a few scoured Taladas. Eventually the draconian hatcheries were discovered and the good dragons no longer felt compelled to honor their oath. They returned to Ansalon to take part in the war. However, not all the good dragons felt compelled to return. Some, especially those who had never laid a brood of eggs, refused and chose to remain in Taladas. They were shunned by their brothers and so joined the ranks of the othlorx.

The characteristics of the othlorx vary according to the dragon type and the individual personality of the creature. General behaviors of each are described below.

Black Dragon: These great beasts have found the southern wilderness of Taladas to be an ideal home with its vast marshes and steaming jungles. Originally selfish and loners, as othlorx they have become xenophobic in the extreme. Takhisis's curse has made them crazed and completely unpredictable. In general, they attack all but an obviously superior enemy on sight, but there are tales of times when they have been cordial, if highly eccentric. Othlorx black dragons cannot cast any priest spells. They are chaotic neutral.

Blue Dragons: There are few blue dragons among the othlorx, since their naturally lawful (though evil) natures compelled the majority of them to heed Takhisis's call. Still, even among these honor-bound creatures there were some skillful enough to claim a loophole or create some elaborate justification for their refusal. Enraged, Takhisis stripped these blue dragons of their priest spells and has compelled them to forever honor their words, precisely, no matter what the statement or intention. As a result, the blue othlorx have become very reticent, much less make promises of any sort.

Already hostile to man, the blue othlorx now blame all their woes on the humans (who caused the Dragonwars anyway). They don't necessarily attack on sight, but they use all their abilities to cause harm and woe to this offensive race. Blue othlorx are extremely lawful evil.

Brass Dragons: For the brass dragons, becoming othlorx was not that difficult a decision. Always prone to be somewhat neutral, they readily allowed this side of their nature to become dominant. Although not cursed for their choice, they are shunned and repudiated by others of their kind. This has hurt them greatly, for they are highly social creatures. Isolated from their own kind, they sometimes become desperate for companionship and conversation. They have been known to visit the nomadic tribes of the steppes, simply to converse and gossip. Many are known by name to the tribesmen. There are also tales of them holding travelers hostage, a captive enforced audience as it were. They are neutral (good).

Bronze Dragons: Most of these enigmatic creatures, being both lawful and good, responded to the call to battle the horrors of the evil dragons. However, some did not come, primarily because they never heard the call. Their friends and contacts are the creatures of the sea, mostly unaffected by the wars. Thus the news of the great sea battles never reached their ears. On rare occasions, these dragons appear on land. They can display an amazing ignorance of current affairs and are considered somewhat backward by their dragon fellows. They hate minotaurs with a violent passion. Bronze othlorx are lawful good, but seldom involve themselves in worldly affairs.

Copper Dragons: Copper othlorx, who in the past have prided themselves on their fine sense of humor, have become somewhat bitter and disenchanted with dragonkind in general since refusing to come to the aid of all good dragons. They see themselves as being unfairly treated, especially for something that's over and done with. They have no love of their fellow dragons nor any who profess to aid or support the dragon cause. Indeed, they delight in tormenting and irritating those good dragons they find, although they still will not cause permanent harm to their fellows.

Shunned by their fellows, the copper othlorx have taken a fancy to the gnomes of Taladas. They find the little fellows vastly amusing, recognizing the minoi for the cosmic joke they really are. Copper othlorx are chaotic good (neutral).

Green Dragons: The green othlorx are obsessive, cruel, and malevolent creatures, indeed hardly different from their uncursed fellows. Since they were unwilling to leave their sheltered groves, Takhisis found her revenge by binding them to those very lands. The green othlorx are filled with a violently territorial passion. Anything, including another of their own kind, is treated as a trespasser to be destroyed. This protectiveness keeps them from straying far or successfully mating. Their numbers have suffered a steady decline.

Red Dragons: Most of the red dragons, consumed by war-lust, eagerly went off to fight in the Wars of the Lance. However, a few who saw opportunities suddenly arise on Taladas refused to go. Takhisis cursed these creatures with a loss of the trait they most pride-their self-confidence.

The red othlorx are a strange lot. They are powerful creatures, still possessed with a great desire for wealth and bloodshed, but they doubt their own abilities and might. As a result, they have become skulkers, attacking from ambush and using every cowardly trick possible to overcome their fears of inferiority. When not in combat, they are excessively vain and boastful, again to compensate. If faced by a powerful foe (even one that seems moderately powerful), they will hesitate and wait for a chance to attack with surprise. The red othlorx are considered cowards by their kin. The red othlorx have no priest spells.

Silver Dragons: The silver dragons have always felt a strong need to aid and assist mankind. Despite this, a considerable number of them refused the call to war, rationalizing this by claiming to remain behind to protect the humans of Taladas. While their motives were true and noble, they could not escape the guilt that came with their decision. Thus silver dragons are compelled to atone for their wrongs by traveling among humans in disguise. They are obsessive about helping others and fighting evil when they find it and try to compel those traveling with them to join their cause.

They have become the most intolerant of dragon species with a rigidly defined code of good and evil. Their punishments are severe and final-death is the only fate for evildoers of any type. The silver othlorx are rigidly good, although they are now chaotic not lawful.

White Dragons: Of all the evil othlorx, the dull-witted white dragons have changed the most. They defied the call out of impulse, refusing because it didn't suit their mood. In return, Takhisis stripped them of all outward signs of intelligence. White othlorx cannot cast spells or speak. They are still intelligent and are perfectly aware of the powers they have lost. This only serves to increase their rage and savageness. They are extremely chaotic evil.

SAQUALAMINOI

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Cold mountains
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Family groups
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Day
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Low (5-7)
TREASURE:	(R,W)
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral

NO. APPEARING:	1d6
ARMOR CLASS:	5
MOVEMENT:	9
HIT DICE:	8
THAC0:	13
NO. OF ATTACKS:	2
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	2d8/2d8
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Nil
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Immune to cold
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	L (10′)
MORALE:	10
XP VALUE:	2,000



The saqualaminoi are a race of humanoid creatures, hulking in height. Adapted to the harsh conditions of the high frozen mountains, their bodies are covered with white or gray fur. This is especially thick on the soles of their feet and even covers their palms. Their heads seem to be squashed between their shoulders. Their facial features are small and flat to prevent frostbite. They have prominent fangs, but do not attack with these. They are intelligent although extremely primitive.

Combat: The saqualaminoi are not subtle or particularly clever fighters. They have never had to be, since their size and power has generally assured they are the biggest creatures in their habitat. Furthermore, although fearsome in appearance, they are actually rather peaceful. They only attack for food or in self-defense.

In combat, they fight with their powerful fists, striking smashing blows capable of felling an ordinary man. A few have learned to make simple bone, wood, and stone clubs. These weapons cause 2d6 +4 points of damage, but the creature can make only one attack per round.

Being well-adapted to snow and cold, saqualaminoi are immune to cold-based attacks, normal or magical (although they still suffer from falling pieces of ice, etc.). Furthermore, their broad feet and claws enable them to move across snow and ice with no movement penalties.

Habitat/Ecology: The saqualaminoi live in the highest mountain ranges either just below or on the fringes of the great glaciers that fill these peaks. Here they make their homes in the ice caves and crevasses that break the frozen wall. Their lives are simple, organized around small family units. Each bull takes a female and together they raise their young. Several families living in the same area form a community. This is nothing more than a loose assemblage of families that only occasionally bands together for the common good.

The most common cooperative action is hunting. The creatures are carnivores, but are not particularly fierce. They prey mostly on the sheep, mountain goats, and marmots found at high altitudes. They do not attack other humanoids, but do fight in defense. They do not normally attack humanoids. Instead they tend co be very curious about creatures of similar appearance.

In times of bad weather or poor food, the saqualaminoi are forced to raid outside their range. Since the fierce winter storms frequently drive away game, these raids most often occur during periods of foul weather. Thus the saqualaminoi have earned the reputation as monsters that come out of the snowstorms to raid and kill.

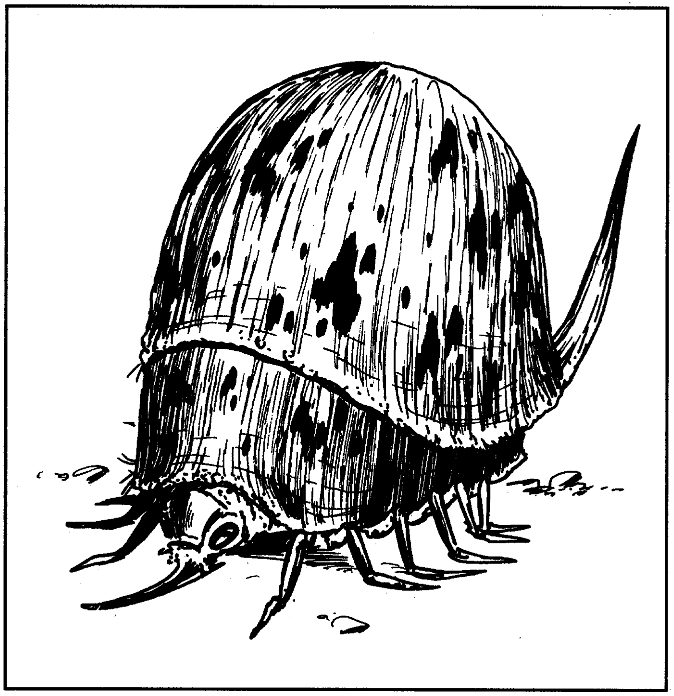
The saqualaminoi are an intelligent people. They have a simple language of grunts and howls. They make very simple stone and wood tools. They do not have a written language or many highly developed concepts of good or evil, but they tend to be good by nature.

Ecology: The saqualaminoi are primitive predators. Fortunately, their pelts are too coarse to be of value. The little treasure they collect comes from the minor baubles they find interesting.

SKRIT

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Desert
FREQUENCY:	Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Night
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Animal (1)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral

NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	3
MOVEMENT:	15
HIT DICE:	6
THAC0:	15
NO. OF ATTACKS:	3
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d3/1d3/1d6
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Surprise, jell&cation
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	L (7')
MORALE:	10
XP VALUE:	2,000



Skrits are carnivorous beetles that live in the cool deserts of Taladas. They are hulking creatures, approximately five to six feet in height.

Similar in appearance to a flea, the skrit's body is protected by a rough, domed carapace. A host of short spiny legs protrude out from under this shell. The head is small and can be retracted under this shell, which tapers back to a narrow, inflexible tail. The overall color of the shell is mottled black and brown, similar to the surrounding terrain.

Combat: The skrit is a fierce predator, quick for its size. Too large to effectively stalk prey, it relies on natural camouflage. It settles among outcroppings of rock and waits unmoving for something to pass close by. While the skrit can be spotted by those who look for it, its camouflage works well enough to conceal it from casual observation at distances beyond 15 feet. Closer than this and the true nature of the "rock" is obvious to intelligent creatures who happen to look that way. Those attacked by a skrit have a -1 penalty applied to their surprise roll if the creature was not spotted.

In combat, the skrit picks out a single target (normally the smallest or weakest looking of the player characters) and attacks it almost to the exclusion of all others. It attacks with its two feeble forelegs and its needle-like mouth. This mouth has retractable barbs, so that once a hit is scored the probe stays in place. Each turn thereafter, the skrit pumps a powerful enzyme into the victim's bloodstream. At the same time, the creature attempts to drag its victim to a safe place where it can eat its prey.

The enzyme has two effects. First it paralyzes the victim. The victim must roll a saving throw vs. poison each round the skrit is attached. A -1 penalty is applied to the saving throw for each round after the first. The paralysis lasts for 3d6 hours or until the enzyme is neutralized. Second, the enzyme also destroys cell tissue, slowly dissolving the body to a soupy gelatinous mass. This is what the skrit will later eat. This effect takes several hours. Victims are paralyzed by the time this occurs. The victim loses 10 hit points per hour from the cell tissue destruction. The enzyme can be halted with a neutralize *poison* spell. Damage from the bite and claws can be healed normally or through spells. Damage caused by the enzyme can only be healed normally or through regeneration.

Habitat/Society: Skrits are solitary hunters with a limited range. They do nor make lairs, but inhabit patches of rough ground where their camouflage is most effective. Within this territory, skrits change hunting locations from day to day, depending on the amount of success.

Skrits have both male and female members, distinguished only by the length of their tails. During the mating season in early spring, the female sends signals to the males by clattering its tail against the rocks. The males gather and combat for the right co be her mate. This is a particularly dangerous time to be among the rocks, for the males will attack anything that moves (+ 1 bonus to attack and damage rolls).

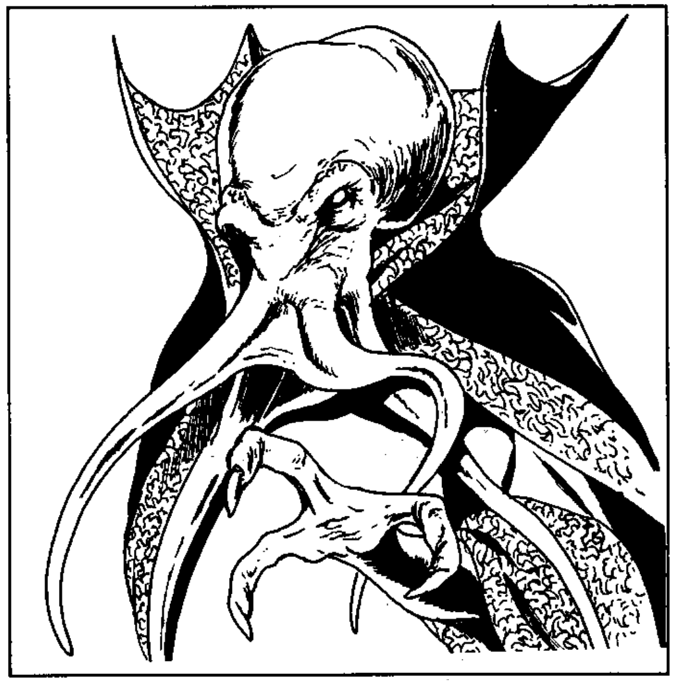
Ecology: The skrit is an essential part of the desert ecological chain. Not only is it an important predator, but after death its body plays a role in the life of the desert dwellers. The huge carapace becomes home for many creatures; most of these are benign or at least of no great threat to adventurers. Sometimes, however, the shells are taken over by huge colonies of ants. The domed shell becomes the home to a ferocious swarm, quite dangerous to disturb.

The shell can also be fashioned into an excellent armor by those skilled in handling the peculiar material. Skilled craftsmen use the carapace to fashion breastplates and other solid pieces of armor. A suit fashioned from this material has an AC 4.

Yaggol

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Jungle
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Tribal
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Night
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Low (5-7)
TREASURE:	U (B)
ALIGNMENT:	Lawful evil

NO. APPEARING:	1d6
ARMOR CLASS:	4
MOVEMENT:	12
HIT DICE:	9
THAC0:	11
NO. OF ATTACKS:	6
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d6 + 4/1d6 +4, Special
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Mind blast
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Camouflage
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	50%
SIZE:	M (7′)
MORALE:	15
XP VALUE:	4,000



The yaggol are a degenerate sub-race of the evil and terrifying mind flayers. Degenerate, in this case, does not mean more debased or decadent (mind flayers are already decadent in the extreme). Rather, the yaggol have culturally regressed, and their once formidable mental powers have atrophied and are forgotten.

In appearance, the yaggol are almost identical to their cousins. They are larger, standing about seven feet tall, and have greater physical power. They have the same uncanny resemblance to malevolent octopi, including the four long tentacles that hide their mouth. Their skin is chameleon-like, shifting in color and pattern to match the background. The possible color changes range from brilliant rich green to a scarlet orange, encompassing various shades of browns, greens, and yellows. They possess three fingers on each hand, weirdly jointed so that any one can oppose the other two. The older members of their community dress in flowing robes, while the youths often wear nothing more than simple loincloths.

Combat: Although they have lost much of the intelligence of their ancestors, the yaggol are still incredibly dangerous and cunning in combat. They are extremely hard to spot if hidden against a natural background-one that falls within the color range of their powers. Elves have a 50% chance of noticing them, all others have a 20% chance. The yaggol must be within 30 feet before they can be spotted. If not detected, the yaggol automatically attack with surprise.

Once in combat, a yaggol attacks with its fists, delivering powerful blows. In addition, it can attack with its long tentacles. As with the mind flayer, any tentacle that hits will worm its way to the victim's brain in 1d4 rounds. It then sucks the brain out and eats it. Each round these attached tentacles cause an automatic 1d6 points of damage. Victims can tear free if they roll a successful Strength check, but doing so causes 1d10 points of damage per attached tentacle.

The yaggol have lost nearly all the great mental powers of mind flayers. Thus they have no innate spell ability and possess only a simple mind blast. This affects those within a radius of ten feet around the creatures. All within the area must roll a successful saving throw vs. wands or suffer 3d6 points of damage from the intense mental agony the creatures radiate. Their own kind (including the more advanced illithids) are immune to this effect. The mind blast places a great strain on the creatures; they must wait an hour before attempting it again. Furthermore, it dazes them for the round immediately after. They can take no actions as they recover their wits.

The yaggol are extremely savage and ferocious. At the same time, they are not so stupid as to fight against hopeless odds. They freely retreat from battles that go against them, even leaving their own kind behind. When they can, they take slaves (dinner for a later date). Failing this, they seek to kill as many as possible to provide a large quantity of fresh meat for the tribe.

Habitat/Society: The yaggol are descended from the more powerful and numerous race of mind flayers, a stellar race from the dark, cold reaches of space. According to their legends, which are extremely garbled, the yaggol once inhabited the stars but are now confined to the earth after offending some powerful being. Much more likely is that they are the survivors of a failed colonization attempt on Taladas, a failure caused by the destruction of the Cataclysm. They speak yaggol and whatever the local tongue is—cha'asi on Taladas. Originally a race that loved only darkness, the yaggol have adapted to surface life, although they still favor the comforting gloom of the jungle. They do not venture beyond the humid warmth of the jungle.

Ecology: The yaggol have a lifespan of no more than 60 years, spending the first five in a tad-pole state. During this rime there is the distinct possibility of being eaten by their elders in times of famine. Birth rates are accordingly high to adjust for the low chances of survival to adulthood. As a race they are asexual and in conversation freely refer to themselves as both he and she, having no understanding of the difference in the two words.

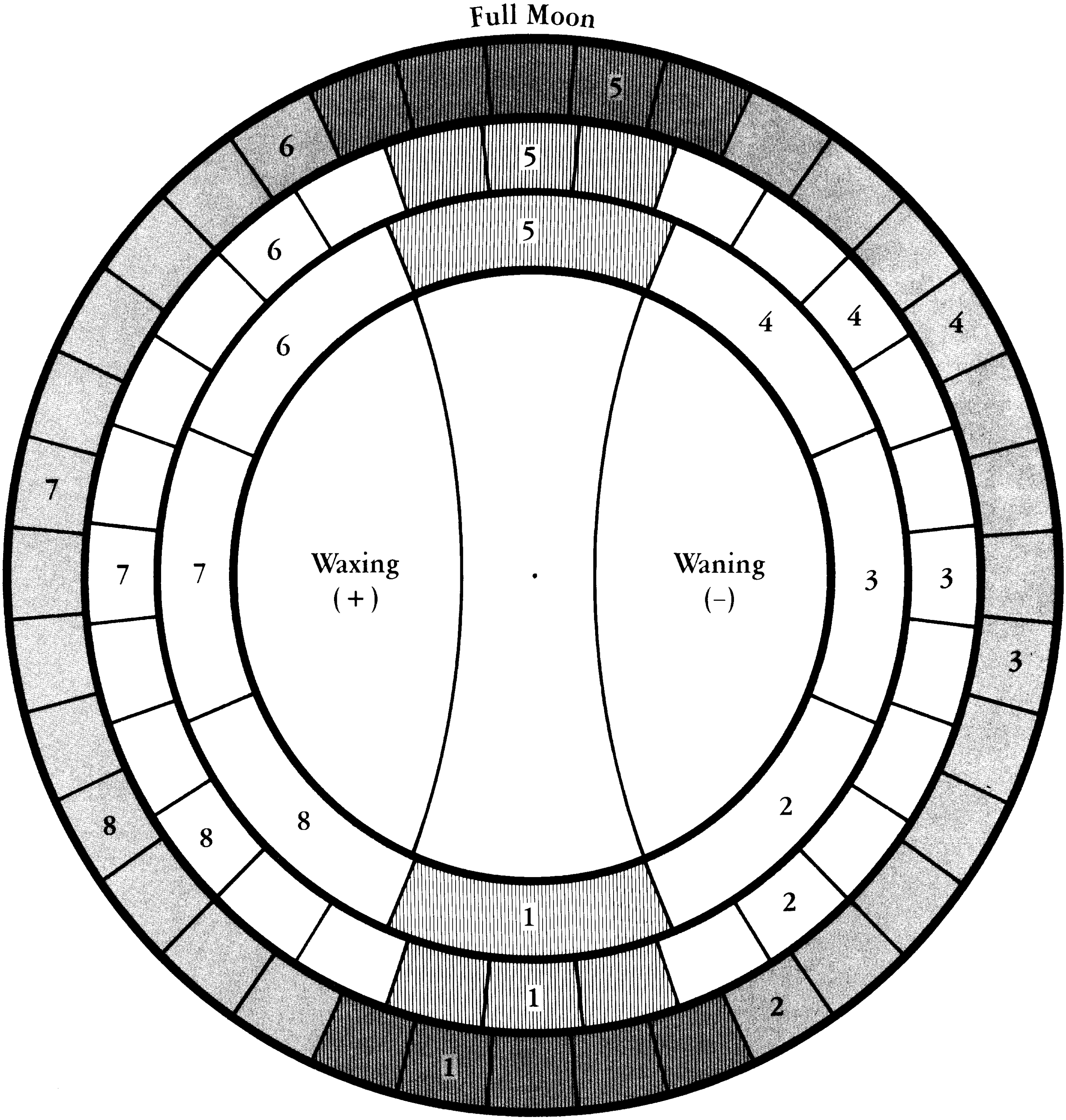
TSR, Inc.
PRODUCTS OF YOUR IMAGINATION™

1050XXX1902

Uigan Raiders



Lunar Display Wheel



Solais (Solinari)

Angomais (Nuitari)

Lunais (Lunitari)

Glass Sailor

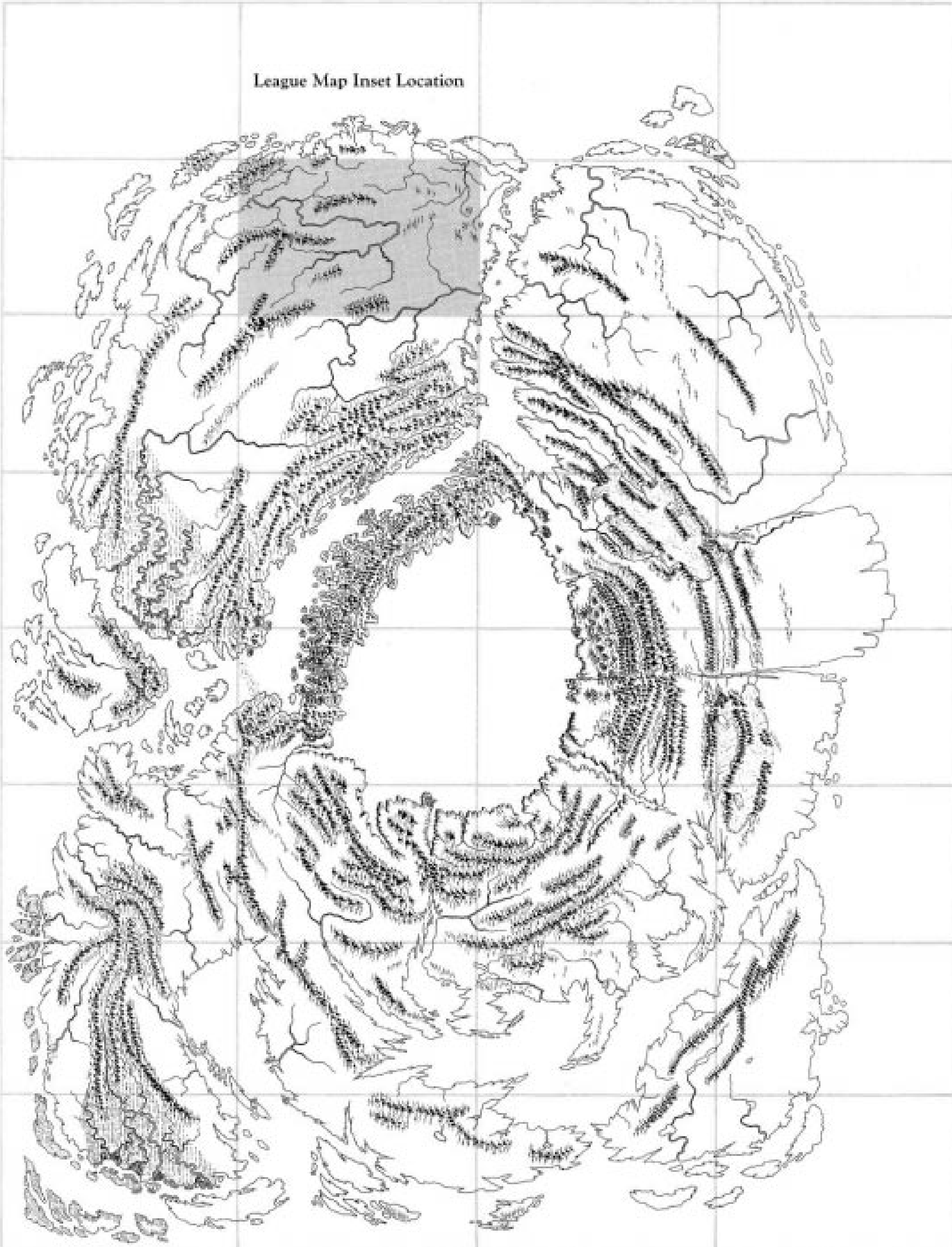


Scorned Dwarf warrior

Glass Sailor in surface costume

Boli Gnome militiaman

Scorned Dwarf chieftain


League Map Inset Location

Hobgoblin and Elves



LUNAR CYCLE RECORD SHEET

Date

Moon	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Solais															
Lunais															
Angomais															

Moon	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Solais															
Lunais															
Angomais															

S,L,A = Full Moon
+ = Waxing
- = Waning

(Blank) = New Moon
○ = Conjunction

Thenol Warriors



Fanatic of Hith

Heavy infantryman, Mallarchus' Company

Count Mallarchus

Light infantryman, Mallarchus' Company

COUNT MALARCHUS

Dual Class Human
Priest 8 / Fighter 10
Lawful Evil

AC	0
MV	12
hp	79
THAC0	16 Pr 11 Ftr (+4 for magic and strength)
#AT	1 (3/2 Ftr)
Dmg	2d4/1d6+1 (+6 for magic and strength)

STR	18/32
DEX	12
CON	17
INT	13
WIS	18 (+4 magic saving throw adj.)
CHA	11

Of all the Great Lords in Thenol, Count Malarchus is one of the strongest supporters of the evil Bishop Trandamere. The count is pictured surrounded by men from his company. His troops are easily identified by their black armor and skull heraldry.

Count Malarchus is easily fifty years old and could be much older. No one knows his true age. He often speaks as if he were personally familiar with events occurring fifty to one hundred years ago. In truth, he is almost one hundred and ten years old.

Today, Malarchus is a scheming, bitter and malevolent man. While he espouses many friendships, he holds no true friends in his heart. He has more than once (and will continue to do so) betrayed those who thought him friend, although he is normally cunning enough to hide his role in their downfall. He does not derive pleasure from inflicting pain and suffering, but doesn't see any evil or harm in it, either. Malarchus is a master manipulator of people and often describes his plans in terms of moves in some great game.

That Malarchus has been evil for as long as people can remember is true, but he has not always been thoroughly corrupt. There was a time when he was honest, if somewhat callow-a long time ago. Decades of toil and struggle during the latter years of Hiteh's Night have corrupted and soured his view.

Currently, Malarchus is vying to wrest the power of Thenol from the grasp of Bishop Trandamere. In Trandamere he has found his greatest opponent. To win the power struggle, he has forgone his role as a warrior lord and entered into the priesthood of Hith. His cunning and skill have elevated him quickly through the ranks, creating a formidable threat for Trandamere, indeed.

Spells Typically Carried:

First Level: Detect good, detect evil, detect magic, detect poison (x2)
Second Level: Find traps, silence 15' rad. (x2), know alignment, wyvern watch
Third Level: Speak with dead, glyph of warding (x2), continual darkness
Fourth Level: Detect lie, abjure, tongues

Magical Items Typically Carried: *Scale mail +3, large shield +2, morning star +3, oil of elemental invulnerability, staff of curing,* and a scroll with *hallucinatory forest, cloak of fear, free action, entangle,* and *control winds.*

Granted Power: *Animate dead* three times per day as per the spell.

League Minotaurs



League Senator

League heavy cavalryman

Hargh Tallarch, Champion

Auxiliary light infantryman

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

HARGH TALLARCH

Minotaur
Fighter 13
Neutral (good tendencies)

AC	-2 (adjusted for magical items)
MV	12
hp	54
THAC0	8 (+3 with short sword and Str; +4 with spear and Str)
#AT	2
Dmg	1-6+3/1-8+3 (+1 for short sword, +2 for spear)

STR	18/58
DEX	12
CON	13
INT	15
WIS	12
CHA	9

Hargh Tallarch is one of the finest professional champions in all of the League. In the twelve years since he first entered the arena, he has built up a record of 237 victories and 87 losses, a formidable not only for the number of victories, but also for the sheer number of combats fought. No one has more contests to his record and few can even come close to it. It is no wonder that his services are fiercely sought after and his fees are high. Such is his reputation that there are even rumors the Emperor will grant him a small villa within the Imperial City.

Tallarch is more than just a successful champion, however. The life of a pampered warrior is not for him. He frequently drops out of sight to take up the other life he greatly enjoys-the adventuring path. During these times he travels with his companions to undertake special missions for well-paying and powerful patrons. Surprisingly, he also holds a commission in the Legions of the League and is sometimes compelled to go out on campaign, not that he particularly minds this. While in the army, he prefers the arms and armor of a simple legionnaire to the more elaborate robes he is entitled to by his rank. He is pictured here with several fellow soldiers of the Legions.

Hargh is a brusque, physical fellow. He thrives on action and danger, easily bored by peaceful times. Although somewhat rash, he has a keen and quick mind. This mind has meant the difference between life and death more than once as he can often out-think more powerful opponents, both in the arena and on the battlefield. As a commander he is stern and exacting, but is considered fair by his men. He is no noble fop and understands the rigors and needs of a soldier's life.

Hargh makes friends easily, but has only a few true close companions. Most people only know him superficially, seeing the facade of the battle-hungry warrior he likes to project. In truth, he is much more complicated and subtle than this. He has a great love of literature, particularly the works of the great playwrights, and he seldom misses the performance of a new work.

Although he originally specialized in combats to the death in the arena, Hargh seldom takes such cases anymore. His reputation allows him to command good fees for less deadly contests: typically battles to the first wound or unconsciousness. In the arena he specializes in the short sword, battle axe, and grappling.

Magical Equipment: (Note: These are not used in the Arena.) *Short sword +1, spear +2, arrows +1* (x14), *banded mail +5, cloak of protection +1, ring of warmth, wands of magic* and *trap/secret door detection, potions of gaseous form, flying,* and *green dragon control.*

Ogres



Ishknut of the Ice People

Talaqua the Ogre

Phrycc and Phracc of the Ilquar Mountains

Non-Player Characters

Ishknut the Ranger

Human of the Ice People
Ranger 10
Chaotic Good

AC	1 (for magic and Dex)
MV	12
hp	66
THAC0	11 (Rod) / 9 (Magical arrows)
#AT	3/2
Dmg	1d6+1/1d6

STR	15
DEX	16
CON	17
INT	9
WIS	14
CHA	10

Ishknut, from the Ice People of the Upper Panak, is ranger of some renown throughout the lands of Northern Hosk, as much for his resourcefulness and skill as for his unusual travelling companions, Tolaqua the Ogre and the goblin twins Phrycc and Phracc.

More than most, Ishknut is a wanderer, an explorer by trade and inclination. Unlike so many of the Tamire who are familiar only with their homelands, Ishknut has ranged far from his original birthplace on the tundra to explore all but the most remote corners of Northern Hosk. His knowledge of land, languages, and people extends to the Tamire (both Uigan and Elf Clan sides), Big and Little Ilquar, the Ring Mountains and, of course, the Upper and Lower Panak. He is less knowledgeable about the strange Shining Lands and the Boli Gnomes, although he has heard of them and is quite curious to see them.

As impressive as his knowledge of places and things is, Ishknut has interesting gaps in his knowledge. He has been to a town (Rudil) once in his life, not an experience he found particularly pleasant. He cannot read any language, although he is reasonably fluent in all of those in Northern Hosk. He knows little to nothing of "civilization" and what it has to offer (and isn't particularly interested, either). Finally, he dislikes being underground and has a mild case of claustrophobia. The thanoi are his chosen enemy, although he has little love for most truly evil creatures.

Ishknut is a cheerful, likable fellow, a trait of so many of his people. While he appears friendly, open and trusting, he is actually quite watchful and cautious. He has learned from experience that the unwary quickly meet unpleasant ends. Even at his most trusting and unwary, Ishknut always has some ace up his sleeve. His mind's not one suited to planning, but improvisation. He is likely to enter a suspicious camp just to see what kind of reaction he'll get.

Magical Items: *Rod of alertness, arrows +1,* (x12), *elven chain mail +2*

Spells Normally Carried:

First Level: Entangle, pass without trace, animal friendship
Second Level: Charm person or mammal, speak with animals
Third Level: Snare

Phrycc and Phracc

Goblin twins
Fighter/thief 3/4 (Phrycc)
Fighter 5 (Phracc)
Neutral (good tendencies)

	Phrycc	Phracc
AC	7	3
MV	6	6
hp	19	38
THAC0	17	16
#AT	1	1
Dmg	1d6/1d4 (hand axe, both)	

STR	12	13
DEX	12	11
CON	12	12
INT	11	11
WIS	11	11
CHA	5	5

Phrycc and Phracc are an oddity in the goblin world. Not only are they identical twins, they are also both essentially good, a true rarity among the goblins. They have fallen in with Ishknut and support him totally. On the other hand, they find nearly everyone else, including Tolaqua, irritating and stupid. While they constantly appear to be bickering with each other, it's much more likely that they are conspiring to commit some mischief.

Tolaqua

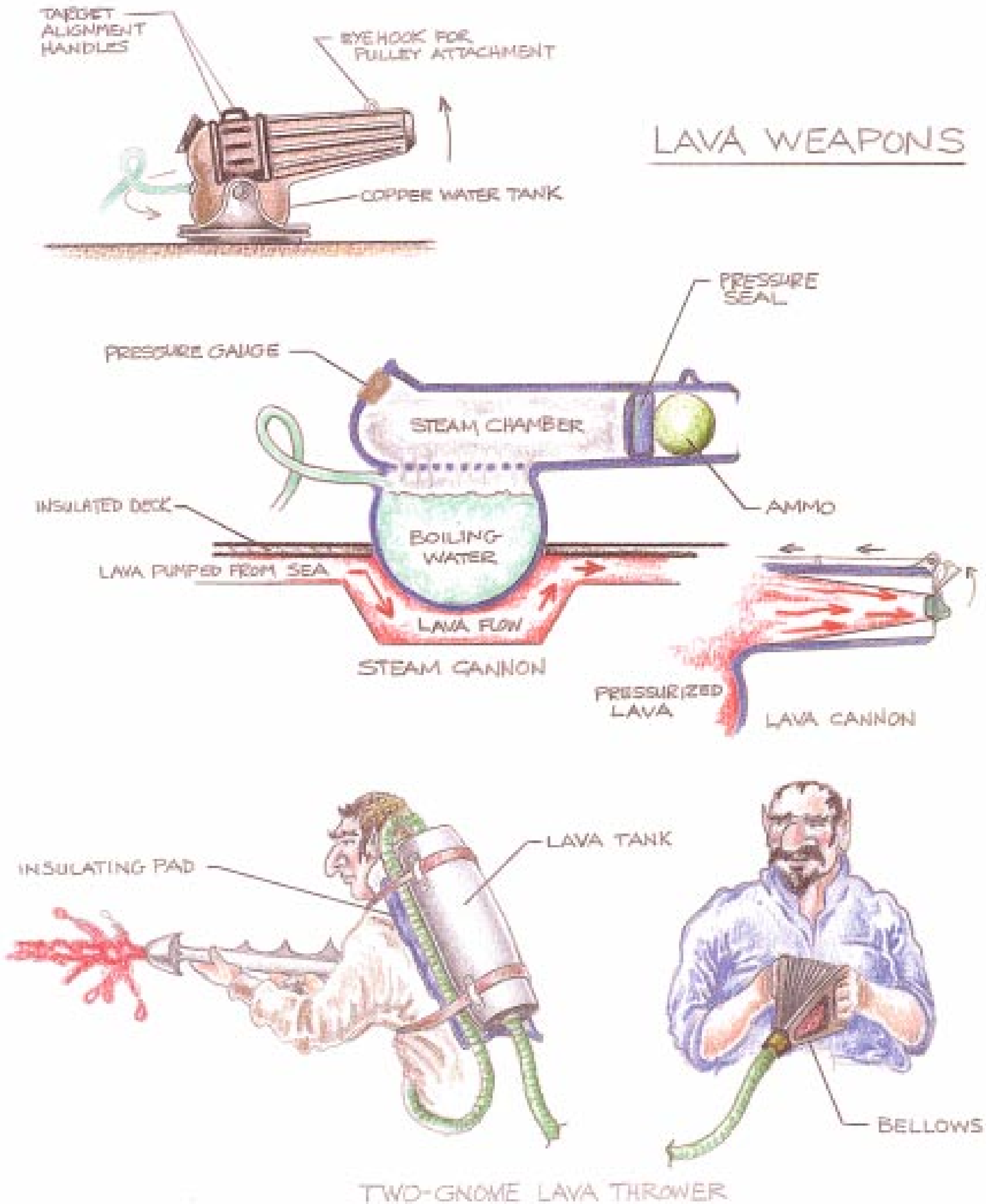
Ogre
Fighter 6
Neutral

AC	5
MV	9
hp	25
THAC0	12 (due to Str)
#AT	1
Dmg	1d6 + 8 (due to Str and race)

STR	18/00
DEX	9
CON	10
INT	12
WIS	10
CHA	7

Tolaqua is an ogre of the Abaquan people. Abandoned by his people in his youth (they considered him sickly), he was found and raised by Ishknut. The two have developed a caring father-and-son relationship, although it is tinged by the clear and obvious differences between them. Nonetheless, Tolaqua loves and protects his "father" with great devotion. ***As*** for Phycc and Phracc, Tolaqua would be much happier ***if*** they were just gone, but since they serve Ishknut, he does not mind.

LAVA WEAPONS



THE STEAM CANNON

The principle of the steam cannon is quite simple. A vessel (called the "pressure kettle") of their unmeltable alloy is mounted on a pivoting carriage. The barrel end is closed by a thick plug of wadding, creating an airtight seal at that end of the barrel. A water line enters the kettle from the rear. The entire kettle is superheated by direct contact with lava that flows through a heating chamber underneath.

To fire the cannon, a plug of wadding is tamped solidly into the barrel by the rammer. The loader than hefts in a shell, usually a ball of cast slag. The cannon is then sighted and ranged, using the handles and pulleys to aim the contraption. (The gun crew must wear thick insulated outfits to protect themselves from the searing heat.) Once set, a valve on the waterline is opened to flood the kettle with a predetermined amount of water, the range of the shot determines the amount of steam pressure that must be built up. The water hits the superheated metal and explodes into steam. The plug (if it works correctly) holds long enough for all the water to convert to steam. When the pressure is high enough, the steam blows wadding and ball from the barrel, firing the cannon. The firing process (once loading and aiming are done) only takes a few seconds.

Although effective, the steam cannons are difficult to use. First, they require a carefully trained gun crew. The rammer must select the right type of plug for the desired range and drive it in just so. The loader must judge the weights of the balls and choose the right size. The surveyors must choose the right elevation and direction to aim the cannon, while the gun captain must know the precise amounts of water to release to achieve the desired effect. Only when a crewman proficient in each step is present can the cannon be used correctly.

Second, steam cannons are somewhat dangerous to use. Whenever a 1 is rolled on the chance to hit, the steam cannon must roll a saving throw vs. crushing blow. If this is failed, the cannon explodes, causing 3-30 points of damage to all within 10' from the scalding steam and metal fragments.

Steam Cannon	
Range* :	500 yards
Rate of Fire:	1 per turn
Crew:	5
THAC0:	20""
Damage:	6-60 (6d10) minus 1d10 per 100 yards

*Range modifiers are not used.
**The chance to hit is always 20 if firing at small groups or lone targets of Huge size or less.

LAVA PROJECTORS

Two other weapons developed by the gnomes are the mounted and portable lava projectors. While generally sound designs, these have not been overly successful. In their eagerness to design the weapon, the inventors neglected the fact that the principle enemies of the gnomes-the fire minions-are immune to the harmful effects of fire and lava!

The projector works by the same simple principle-lava is pumped to build up pressure then released through a small nozzle. The mounted projectors are fitted into carriages similar to the steam cannons, which they resemble. The portable lava projector is a two-gnome operation. One gnome, the firer, carries the tank and projector. Behind him is the pump-gnome who works the bellows that creates the pressure needed. The portable version has several drawbacks. First, the insulating pad is of limited effectiveness. After about 20 minutes (two turns), the tank becomes too hot. The crew must stop and replace the pad with a cool one (carried by the pump-man) or the firer suffers 1-6 points of damage per round. Second, there is a risk of tank rupture. If this happens, the poor firer suffers 10-100 points of damage from the intense heat. The projecter crew is heavily encumbered.

Lava Projectors	
Mounted	
Range:	60 yards
Rate of Fire:	1 per 3 rounds
Crew:	3
THAC0:	19
Damage:	3-30

Portable	
Range:	20 yards
Rate of Fire:	1 per round, 5 shots maximum
Crew:	2
THAC0:	As per firer
Damage:	2-20

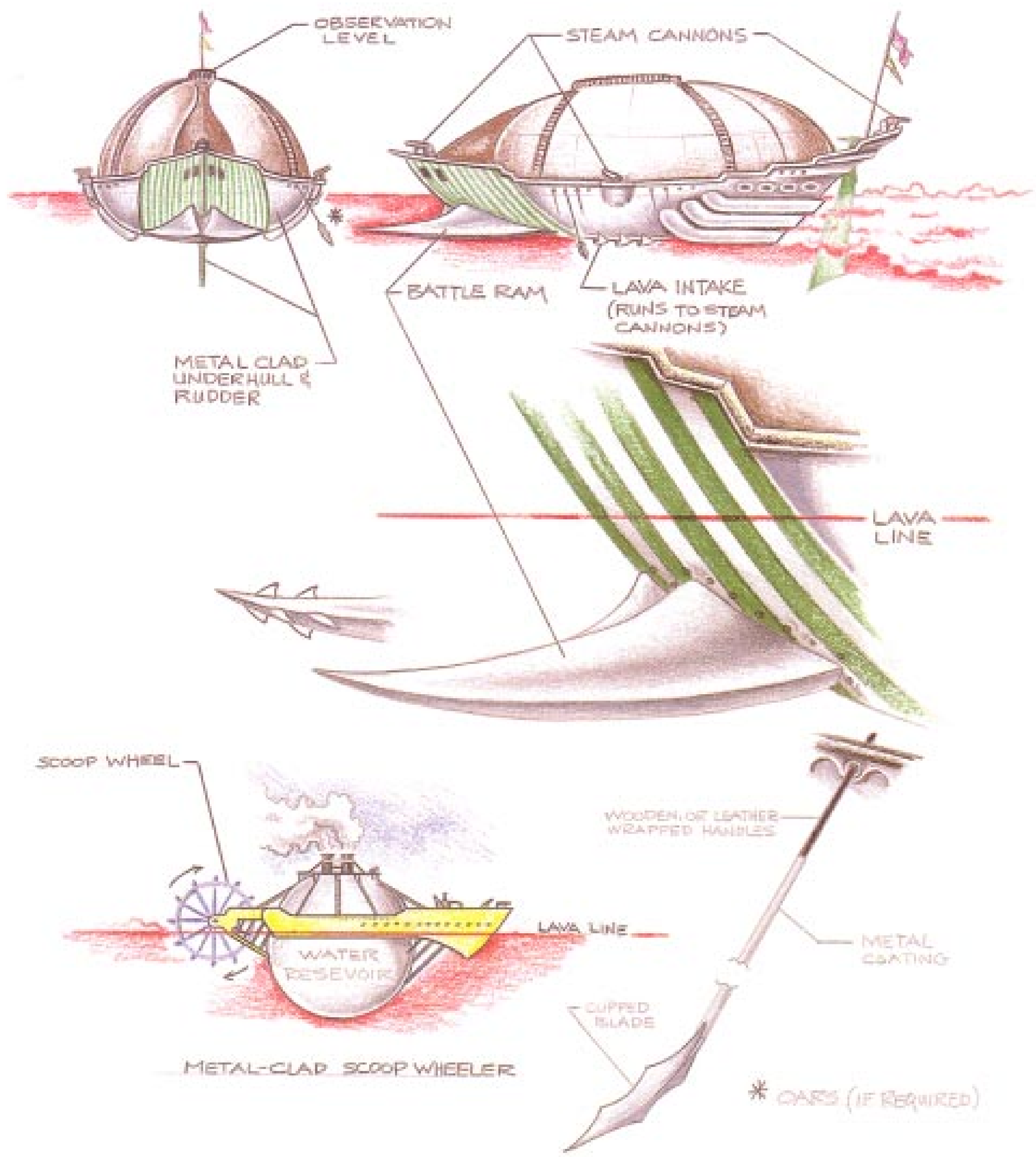
GNOME FLYERS

These simple gliders are a common feature of the gnomes of Hitehkel. Capitalizing on the powerful air currents rising from Hitehkel, the gnomes have developed a variety of single seat hang gliders. The two basic models are the ordinary glider and the rarer steam flyer. Each requires a pilot proficient in gliding and no larger or heavier than an unarmored gnome.

Gnome Glider
Max. Speed: 24
Maneuverability Class: C
Notes: Gliders can only accelerate by diving.

Steam Flyer
Max. Speed: 15
Maneuverability Class: D

Notes: Unlike gliders, steam flyers are powered by steam-powered flapping wings. (Water is heated by small amounts of lava stored in insulated tanks.) Steam flyers can accelerate up to 3 movement factors per round. The steam tanks provide two hours of flight. In emergencies, these can be jettisoned and the flyer flown like a glider.


OBSERVATION LEVEL
STEAM CANNONS
BATTLE RAM
LAVA INTAKE (RUNS TO STEAM CANNONS)
METAL CLAD UNDERHULL & RUDDER
LAVA LINE
SCOOP WHEEL
WOODEN OR LEATHER WRAPPED HANDLES
LAVA LINE
WATER RESEVOIR
METAL COATING
CUPPED BLADE
METAL-CLAD SCOOP WHEELER
* OARS (IF REQUIRED)

THE FIRE FLEET

Considered one of the masterpieces of gnomish engineering, the fire fleet ships of the gnomes are fast vessels capable of sailing across the Burning Sea, the vast ocean of lava at the center of Hitehkel.

The fire fleet ships, however, are far different from normal sailing vessels. First, they are made of special lava-resistant alloys developed by the gnomes. These materials are essential: wood, the normal ship-building material, would not survive more than an instant in the burning temperatures of the lava. Second, the ships of the fire fleet do not rely on the winds for their propulsion. This was certainly possible, since Hitehkel is swept by fierce storms generated by the molten lava, but such a non-mechanical method did not appeal to the gnomes. Instead, they drew upon the heat of the lava itself to provide their motive power.

The galley shown is operated by steam propulsion. The principle feature of the ship is the large dome-like section amidships. This is the water reservoir or "kettle" as the engineers call it. Heated by the fiery temperature of the lava, the water in the reservoir quickly comes to a boil. The steam is allowed to build up pressure and is then routed to the exhaust pipes at the back of the ship. This provides a simple form of jet propulsion to drive the ship forward.

This method has its drawbacks. Because the water is boiled away, these ships can only be used between known ports or for predetermined journeys. Running out of water in the middle of the Burning Sea can have serious consequences. Second, there have been instances in which the reservoir has built up too much pressure and the tank has exploded. The gnomes assure their passengers that this is a rare event and they should not worry, however.

The galley shown is a war vessel, part of the fleet that invaded the Tower of Flame. It can carry a company of 300 gnomes in cramped gnome-sized quarters. Four steam cannons are fitted on the sides (see Steam Cannon for details). All living quarters are sealed, including the observation dome and the gangways to reach it, to protect the gnomes from the poisonous gasses of Hitehkel.

Fire Fleet War Galley

Crew:	20
Passengers:	300
Range per Tank:	500 miles
Top Speed:	10 mph

The second ship pictured is a smaller and slower scoop wheeler. Unlike the war galley, the scoop wheeler is driven by a simple steam engine. Again, water in the reservoir is heated by lava. However, this time the steam powers the paddlewheel that drives the ship through the water. Most of the steam is condensed back to water and recycled through the system. The chimneys at the top are the exhausts for the emergency pressure releases on the water reservoir. Because it recycles its water, the scoop wheeler is able to venture greater distances, especially into unknown territories. A scoop wheeler is typically fitted with a single steam cannon.

Scoop Wheeler Merchantman

Crew	10
Passengers	20
Ranger per Tank	5000 miles
Top Speed	6 mph

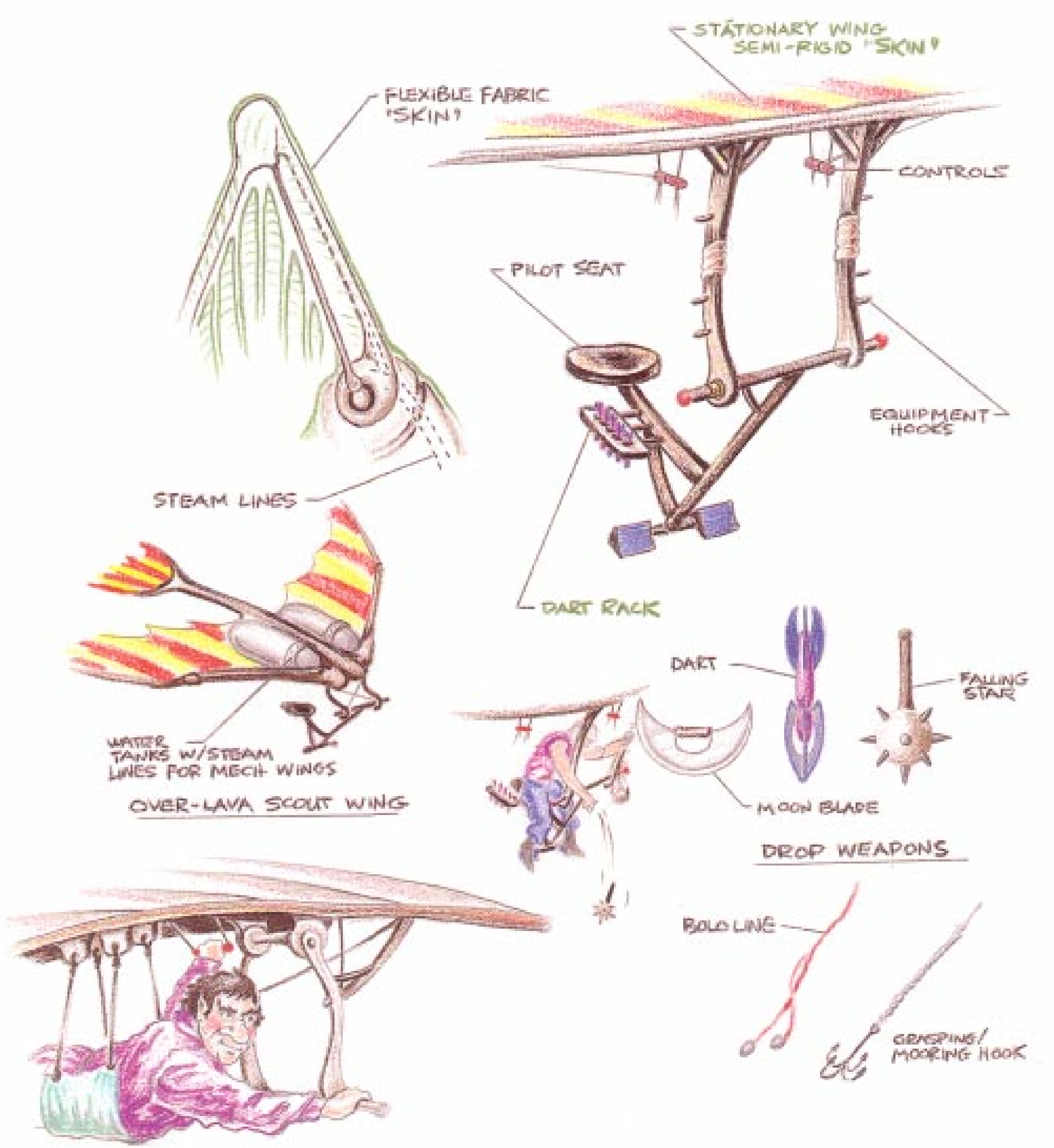
SELF-CONTAINED AIR PURIFIER

Another necessary feature for the crews of the fire fleet is the contained breathing system. The gasses released by the lava of Hitehkel can be very poisonous and certainly damage health in the long term. Therefore, the gnomes have designed a simple breathing apparatus. It consists of three parts: a breathing helmet, backpack scrubber, and foot pumping system. The helmet seals to the clothing, blocking outside gasses. Air is sucked in through the bellows-like shoes (powered by the gnome's walk), forced through the scrubber where poisonous fumes are removed, and then blown into the helmet. The scrubber cleans the air by forcing it through several different combinations of fluids and chemicals. A scrubber has a life of about 100 hours (1d20–80), after which the expensive fluids must be replaced.

The greatest drawback of the breather is that the wearer must continually walk around to provide the power to the pumps. This leads to the curious sight of gnomes steadfastedly marching in place to keep their breathers running.

AUTOMATIC WALL-SCRUBBER

The steam powered wall scrubber is a fine example of good intentions gone awry. Originally designed as a labor-saving device, it quickly proved itself to be a nuisance and hazard. Comical disasters are described of experiments in residential areas were the device got out of control, stuck, worked too fast, or scrubbed too hard. Those who have experienced the device have learned to go visiting whenever the tests are announced. The inventors, while stung by these failures, have only redoubled their efforts to produce a successful model. Impromptu tests are often carried out throughout the citadels.


FLEXIBLE FABRIC 'SKIN'
STATIONARY WING SEMI-RIGID 'SKIN'
CONTROLS
PILOT SEAT
EQUIPMENT HOOKS
STEAM LINES
DART RACK
WATER TANKS W/STEAM LINES FOR MECH WINGS
OVER-LAVA SCOUT WING
DART
FALLING STAR
MOON BLADE
DROP WEAPONS
BOLO LINE
GRASPING/ MOORING HOOK

NORTHERN HOSK

THE TAMIRE

2 Brass dragon
3 Locust swarm
4 Giant spider
5 Merchant caravan
6 Goblin war party
7 Wolves
8 Uigan or Elf Clan raiding party
7 Wild horses
10 Deer or small game
11 Uigan or Elf Clan hunting party
12 Uigan or Elf Clan hunting party
13 Uigan or Elf Clan village
14 Uigan or Elf Clan raiding party
15 Steppe tiger
16 League scouting patrol
17 Alan-Atu hunting party
18 Kazar raiding party
17 Ogre raiding party
20 Ankheg

PANAK

2 Selkie
3 White dragon
4 Giant owl
5 Walrus man (thanoi)
6 Ice bear
7 Polar bear
8 Ice People hunting party
9 Nasif (reindeer) herd
10 Nasif herd
11 Wolves
12 Kazar raiding party
13 Ogre
14 Giant weasel
15 Wolverine
16 Frost giant
17 Saqualaminoi
18 Ice toad
17 Remorhaz
20 Winter wolf

TIDERUN

2 Bronze dragon
3 Weed eel
4 Elves
5 Dragonfish
6 Giant catfish
7 River pirates
8 Uigan raiding party*/ League patrol**
9 Peasants
10 Merchant ship
11 Merchant caravan
12 Large hawk
13 Herd animal
14 Giant frog
15 Elf Clan raiding party* / Minotaur ship
16 Giant gar
17 Leech swarm
18 Greenhag
19 Goblin raiding party* I Adventurers
20 Killer frog

* North shore only
** South shore only

ILQUAR MOUNTAINS

2 Forest troll
3 Steppe tiger
4 Gurik cha'ahl
5 Trapdoor spider
6 Elf Clan war party
7 Merchant caravan
8 Goblin war party
9 Goblin hunting party
10 Goblin hunting party
11 Deer or small game
12 Giant spider
13 Wolves
14 Ogre
15 Alan-Atu hunting party
16 Wyvern
17 Pegasus
18 Hill giant
19 Green dragon
20 Hippogriff

RING MOUNTAINS

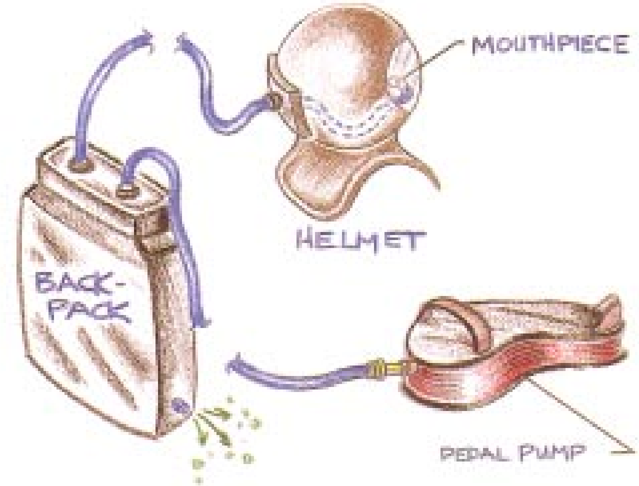
2 Green dragon
3 Scorned dwarf
4 Boli gnome
5 Saqualaminoi
6 Forest troll
7 Mountain lion
8 Abaquan ogre hunting party
9 Wolves
10 Deer
11 Black bear
12 Fire beetle
13 Bats
14 Badger
15 Cave bear
16 Centaur
17 Copper dragon
18 Bulette
19 Red dragon
20 Silver dragon

SHINING LANDS

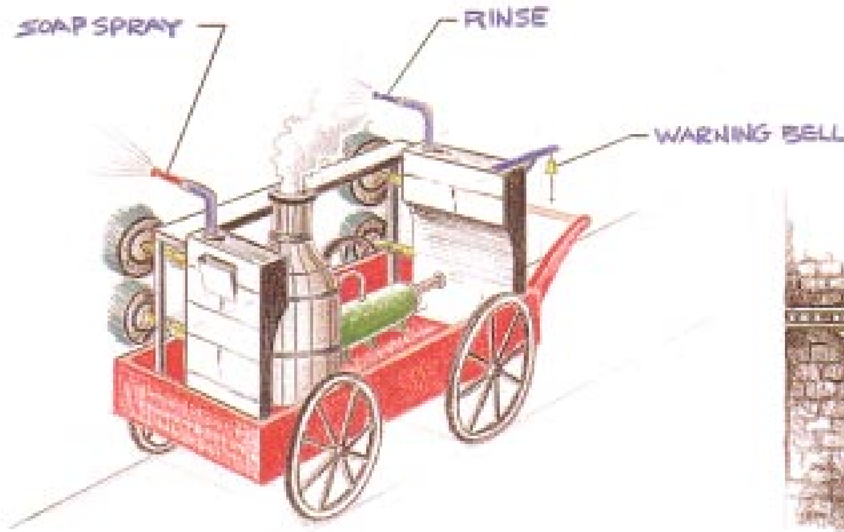
2 Hobgoblins
3 Boli gnomes
4 Skrit
5 Horax
6 Huge bats
7 Manticore
8 Glass Sailor ship
9 Gazelle herd
10 Giant centipedes
11 Gazelle herd
12 Hyenas
13 Jackals
14 Cheetah
15 Giant lizard
16 Brass dragon
17 Falcon
18 Fire lizards
19 Scorned Dwarf merchants
20 Sandling



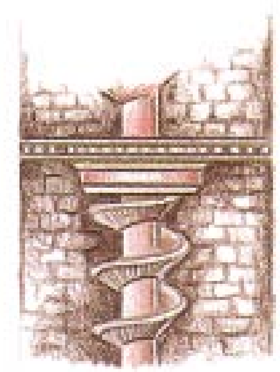
LONG-DURATION DIVING HELMET



BREATHING SYSTEM



STEAM POWERED WALL SCRUBBER



ELEVATOR

NOTE: VARIATIONS CAN BE USED FOR OTHER FUNCTIONS (EX. MOVABLE "CROWSNEST" ON SHIP)

Spheres of the Gods

Deity	Ani.	Ast.	Charm	Com.	Creat.	Div.	Ele.	Guard.	Heal.	Nec.	Plant.	Pro.	Sum.	Sun	Wea.
Branchala	—	—	—	—	M	—	—	—	*	—	M*	—	—	M	M
Chemosh	—	M	—	M*	—	—	—	—	—	M	—	—	—	m	—
Chislev	M*	—	*	—	—	—	—	—	M	—	—	—	—	m	M
Gilean	—	M	—	m	M	M*	—	—	m	—	—	M	—	m	—
Habbakuk	M	—	—	—	M	—	M	—	—	—	—	—	—	m	—
Hiddukel	—	—	—	—	—	M	—	M	—	*	—	—	M	m	—
Highfather	Any														
Kiri-Jolith	—	M	*	M	M	m	—	M	m	*	—	—	—	m	—
Majere	*	M	M	—	—	M	—	—	—	—	—	—	M	m	—
Mishakal	—	M	M	m	M	M	—	—	M	M	—	*	—	M	—
Morgion	—	M	—	—	—	—	—	—	M	—	M	—	—	m	—
Paladine	—	M	M	m	—	*	—	M	—	—	—	M	—	M	—
Reorx	—	—	—	M	M*	—	M	—	—	—	—	—	—	M	—
Sargonnas	—	M	M	M	—	—	—	—	M	—	—	*	M	m	—
Shinare	—	—	M	—	M	—	—	M	—	—	—	M	—	m	—
Sirrion	—	—	—	M*	—	—	—	M	M	—	—	—	M	m	—
Takhisis	—	M	—	*	*	—	—	M	—	—	—	M	M	m	—
Zeboim	M	—	—	—	M	—	M	—	—	—	—	—	—	m	M
Zivilyn	—	M	—	—	—	M	—	—	—	M	M	—	—	m	—

Spheres are defined in the 2nd Edition rules.

M The deity grants major access to this sphere.

m The deity grants minor access to this sphere.

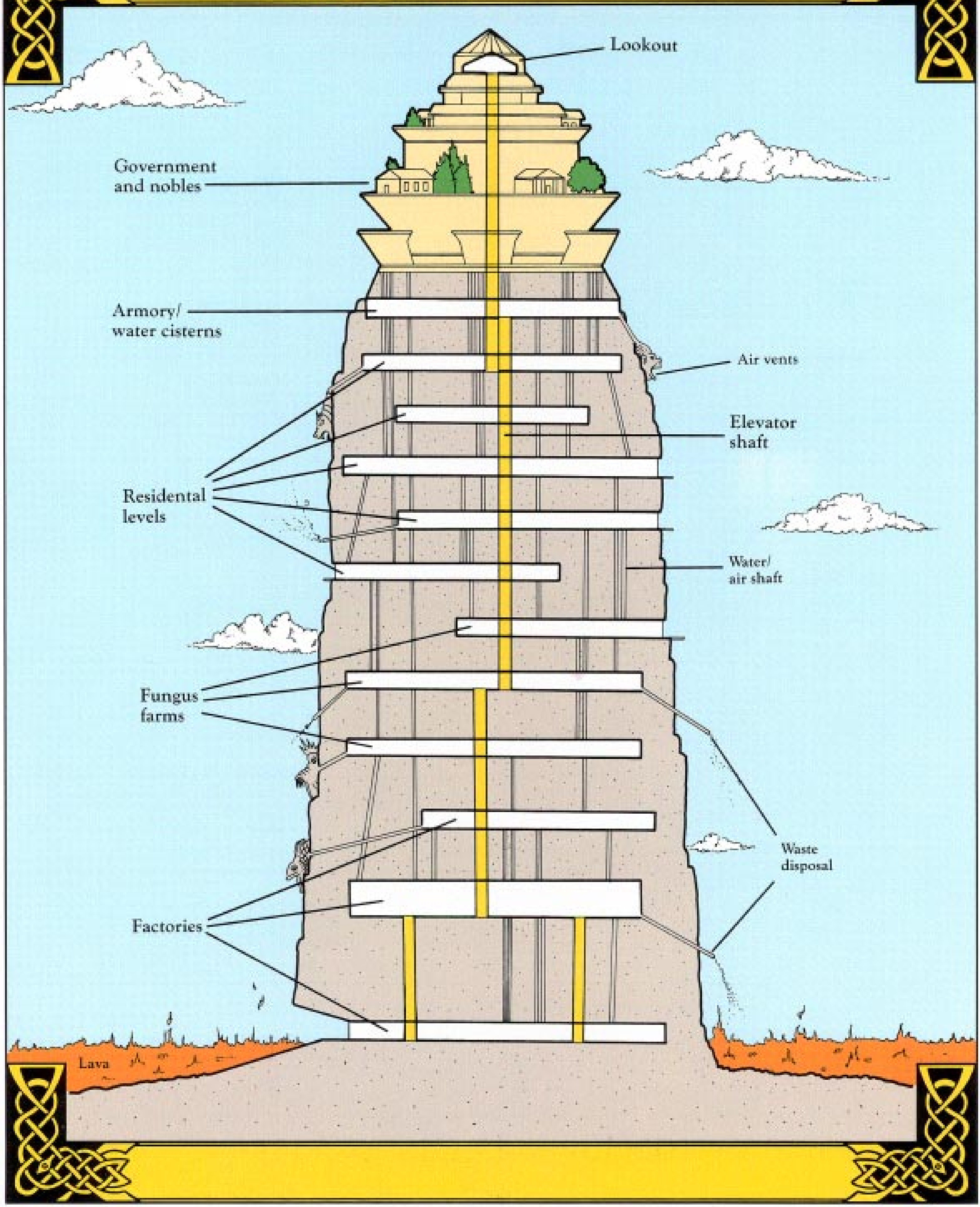
* The deity has limited powers to grant spells in this sphere. Spells granted are left to the DM's discretion based upon the immediate need. Thus, Hith grants the ability to animate dead to his Thenolite priests so they can fill their armies, but does not allow them access to the majority of necromantic spells.

Names of the Gods in Taladas

Ansalon Name	Taladan Name(s)	Ansalon Name	Taladan Name(s)
Branchala	Not normally worshiped	Morgion	Not normally worshiped
Chemosh	Not normally worshiped	Nuitari**	Angomais (League), Ne'ugiar (Uigan), Orgentos (Scorned)
Chislev	Jijin (Uigan), Quoyai (Elf Clan)	Paladine	Not normally worshiped
Gilean	Graylord (League)	Reorx	Reorx (Gnomes, Dwarves)
Habbakuk	The Sea Lord (Armach), Han-Yagas (League), Blindel the Dolphin Lord (Baltch)	Sargonnas	Sargonnas (Minotaurs)
Hiddukel	Hiteh (Tamire/League), Hith (Thenol), Usa the Mighty (Armach), Usk-Do (Hobgoblins)	Shinare	Nuran (League)
Highfather	Highgod (Glass Sailors)	Sirrion	Udras the Alchemist (Gnomes)
Kiri-Jolith	Qu'an the Warrior (Uigan)	Solinari* *	Solais (League), Toyaqual (Uigan), Auros (Scorned)
Lunitari**	Lunias (League), Ferros (Scorned)	Takhisis	Erestem (Uigan), Mwarg (Hobgoblins)
Majere	Not normally worshiped	Zeboim	Not normally worshiped
Mishakal	Mislaxa (general), Ildamar the Earthspirit (Armach)	Zivilyn	Not normally worshiped

* * Not considered a deity proper, but a powerful spirit.

Typical Gnome Citadel



SOUTHERN HOSK

THE LEAGUE LANDS

2 Ogre
3 Gnomes
4 Huldrefolk
5 Kender
6 Porcupine
7 Merchant caravan
8 Army patrol
9 Farmers
10 Farmers
11 Herd animal
12 Herd animal
13 Peasants
14 Farmhouse
15 Minotaurs
16 Adventurers
17 Skunk
18 Poisonous snake
19 Troll
20 Will o' wisp

ARMACH

2 Sylvanaes noble and entourage
3 Sylph
4 Dryad
5 Minotaur emissary/merchant
6 Human noble and entourage
7 Giant spider
8 Sylvanaes hunting part
9 Human merchant
10 Human hunting party
11 Peasant
12 Deer
13 Huge spider
14 Poisonous snake
15 Centaur
16 Kender exploring party
17 Satyr
18 Pixie
19 Wichtlin
20 Dwarf emissary / merchant

BLACKWATER GLADE

2 Catoblepas
3 Weed eel
4 Poisonous frog
5 Black dragon
6 Bakali
7 Hydra
8 Giant crocodile
9 Swamper hunter
10 Swamper hunter
11 Water beetle
12 Crocodile
13 Giant leech
14 Giant eel
15 Giant frog
16 Dragonfish
17 Electric eel
18 Muckdweller
19 Will o' wisp
20 Shambling mound

THE NEW MOUNTAINS

2 Ettin
3 Forest troll
4 Ogre
5 Ankheg
6 Giant ants
7 Armach elf hunting party
8 Huldrefolk
9 Human hunting party
10 Stag beetle
11 Black bear
12 Herd animals
13 Wild boar
14 Wyvern
15 Brown bear
16 Trapdoor spider
17 Centaur
18 Wichtlin
19 Bulette
20 Green dragon

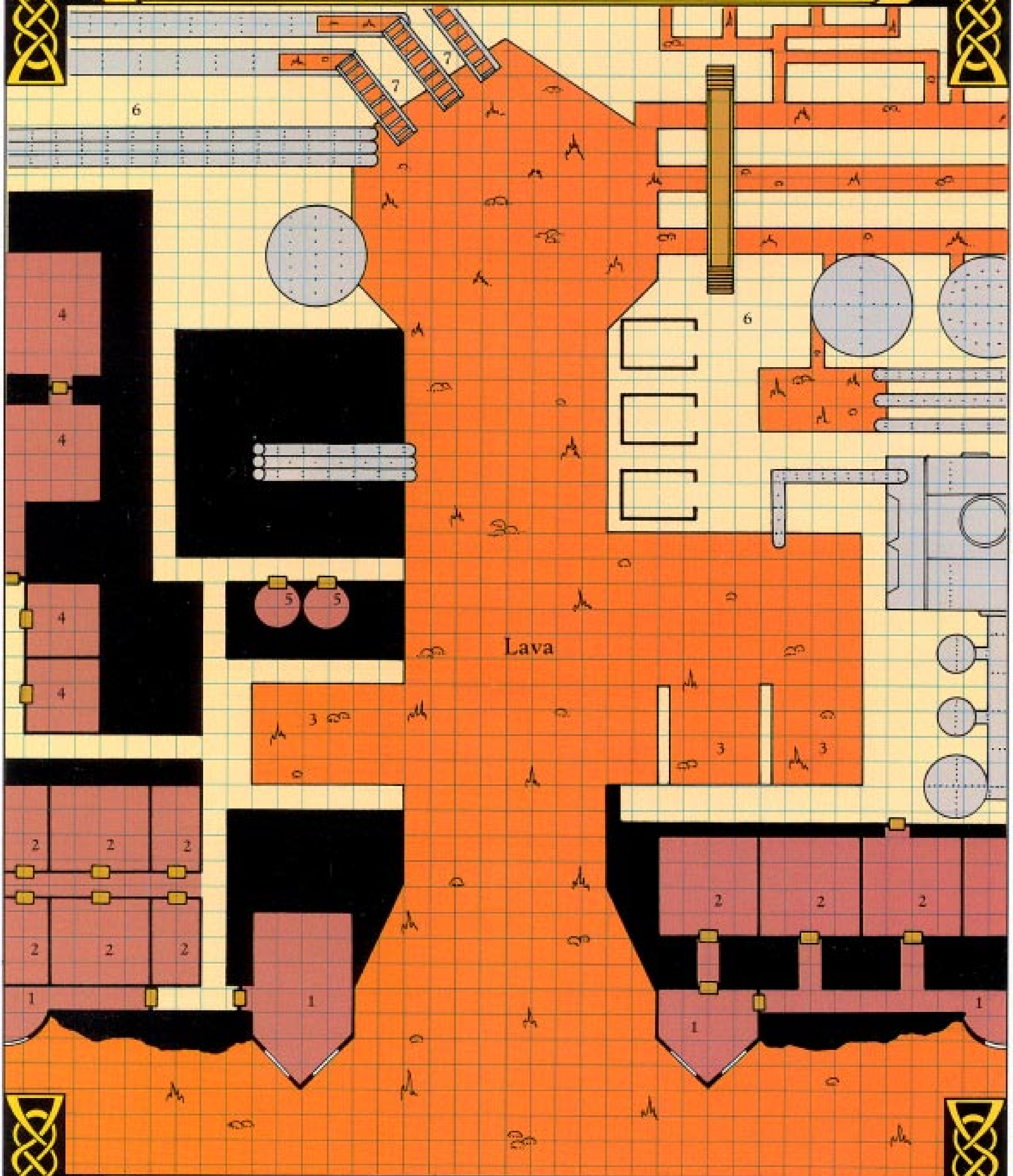
THENOL

2 Bakali
3 Marak kender
4 Dire wolf
5 Hobgoblins
6 Spectre
7 Zombie army unit
8 Fanatics of Hith
9 Peasants
10 Peasants
11 Deer
12 Giant rats
13 Thenolian merchant caravan
14 Giant spider
15 Lord's Company
16 Lord and entourage
17 Priests of Hith
18 Two-headed troll
19 Wight
20 Huge bats

STEAMWALL

2 Red dragon
3 Silver dragon
4 Huldrefolk
5 Choke creepers
6 Hill giant
7 Marak kender scouting patrol
8 Fianawar dwarf merchant caravan
9 Hobgoblin headhunting party
10 Giant rats
11 Huge scorpion
12 League merchant caravan
13 Giant toad
14 Stirges
15 Giant scorpion
16 Giant ants
17 Giant ant lion
18 Copper dragon
19 Adventurers
20 Dragonne

Dock/Foundry Level



Governmental Office Level

This level of a typical gnome citadel shows one of the higher layers devoted to the functions and trappings of high office. As befits its importance, the architecture here strives to be grand and majestic, dominating in size. This means that doors, windows and ceilings tend to be scaled to human heights instead of the standard gnome configurations.

Unlike other levels of the citadel, the separate buildings and offices here are open to the air. The entire level is a broad plaza, partially covered by a roof. A low railing (about 18" high) protects unwary gnome children from toppling over the edge. Large displays of potted plants and a reflecting pool give the airy plaza a parklike feel.

I. Elevator

This is the standard gnome screw elevator. An emergency stairwell is carved into the side of the shaft.

2. Hall of Justice

The most significant building on the level is the Hall of Justice. Intentionally made dour and almost windowless to inspire respect (and a little terror), the Hall of Justice is were most of the major suits are filed and heard. Most of the hall is taken up by chambers for the judges (those with windows) and offices for their secretaries. However, there is one major audience hall where particularly popular or important cases are heard.

3. Ministries

These buildings are the offices and meeting rooms of the different bureaucratic ministries needed to run the citadel. All are staffed by non-descript, gray little functionaries and civil servants. Different ministries include the Board of Trade, the Water Council, the Treasury, the Board of Invention and Registration, the Charitable Relief Organization, and the Guild of Scribes.

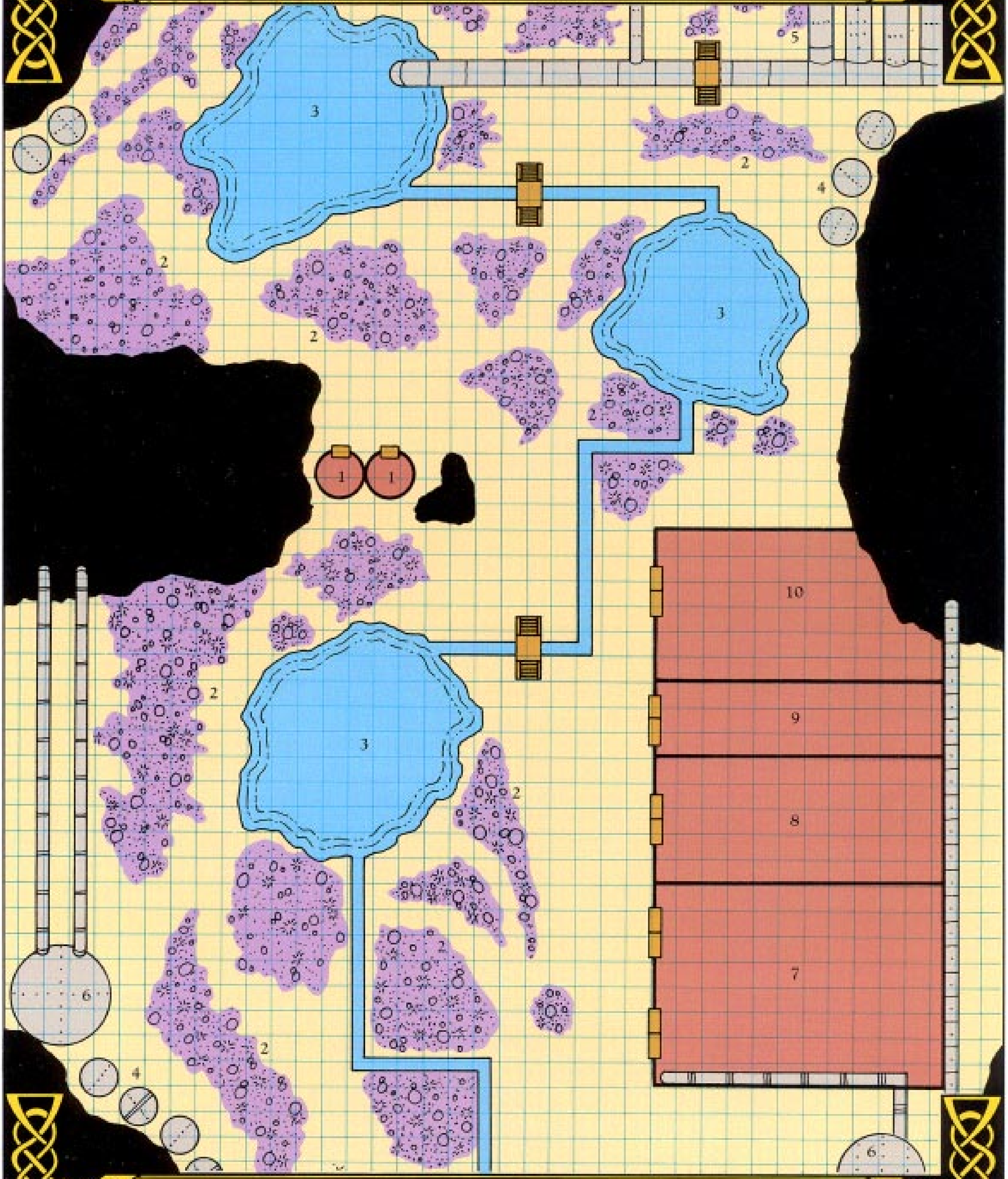
4. Records

The gnomes, being builders, produce voluminous amounts of paper-patents, proposals, lawsuits, and edicts. All these are carefully kept and filed by the detail-minded gnomes. The records halls are filled with cabinets of documents. The staff present is small since most of the filing is handled by an amazing collection gears, cables, pulleys, and clamps designed to file and unfile. Of course, the chance of getting the right document on the first (or fifth) try is almost nonexistent.

5. Offices

These dreary, dingy little spaces are normally crammed with the desks of five to ten minoi civil servants. The offices are always piled high with papers, ledgers, and dangerous little minoi devices meant to make the work easier. (Copying machines are particularly sinister.) Any character attempting to find or learn anything through the little gnomish bureaucrats will invariably be told: "It's not my job, talk to him," or "Sorry, that's the office next door."

Fungus Farm Level



Dock/Foundry Level

The foundries, common to all the citadels with access to the Lava Sea, are a bustle of activity day and night. Here the gnomes seek to smelt enough usable ore from the molten slag for casting purposes. It takes a great deal of lava to produce a single bar of usable iron.

This level is also the docking bay for the ships that sail the Lava Sea. Thus, it is one of the main entrances to the citadel. Due to the threat of fire minion attack, the main gates are heavily guarded.

Unlike some levels of the citadel, the ceilings here are exceptionally high to accommodate the huge pieces of machinery and the fire fleets that use this level.

1. Redoubts

Projecting out over the lava are these defensive points, designed to serve as firing platforms for the gnomish warriors against attackers from the lava. Each redoubt is fitted with an air filtration system and firing slits for crossbows and magical spells. The slits can be shuttered and sealed when not in use, leaving open only periscope-like viewing ports. Each redout is manned at all times by 2-3 gnome sentries.

2. Barracks

These rooms are the quarters for the foundry guards. The duty is an unpopular one because the foundry is noisy, smelly, and hot 24 hours a day. The garrison duty is rotated to a different outfit every month. Each barracks room holds 3-18 gnome warriors at any given time. The small rooms are the officers' quarters.

3. Berths

These areas are the docking bays for the fire fleet ships. Both troop and cargo ships dock here. Unloading equipment —cranes, pulleys, hooks, etc. for handling cargo-hangs in lofts over each bay. When a ship arrives, the cargo is loaded onto pallets lowered from the ceiling and then hoisted into warehouses on the floor above. The gnomes working this equipment jokingly refer to themselves as "spiders."

4. Storerooms

These unlit rooms hold amazing collections of junk and useful items. No one, not even the gnomes who work on these floors, is certain of what can be found here.

5. Elevator Shafts

These are elevators for personnel; freight elevators are located elsewhere on the floor. In one shaft, the screw turns upwards. In the other, the screw wind down, creating one up and one down elevator. There are no emergency exits from these elevators.

6. Foundry Floor

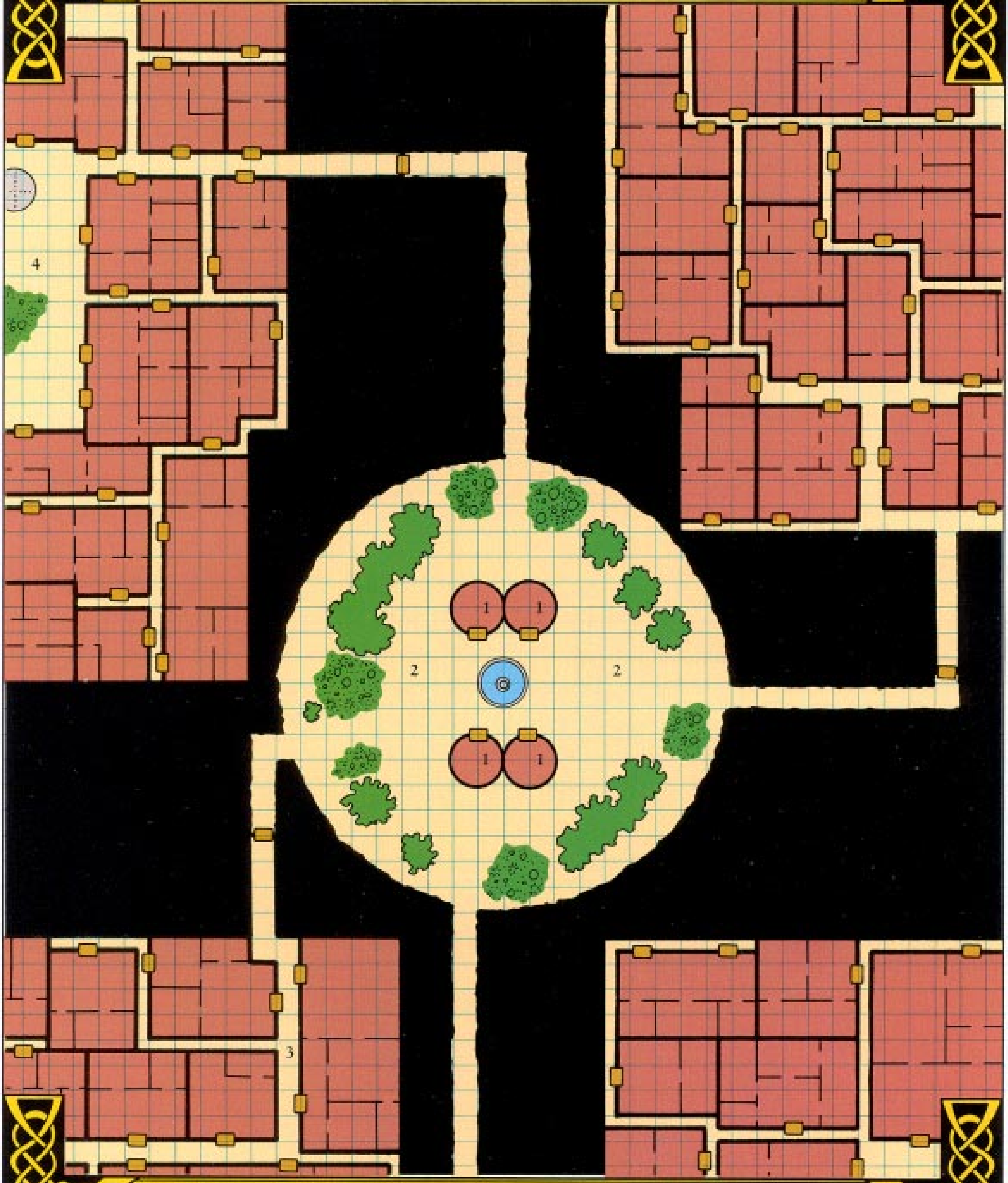
The main floor of this level is a hubbub of energy. Here is where much of the metal-smelting work is carried out. Lava is pumped from the basin or diverted into small canals to places where it can be separated, purified, and cast into workable bars of metal. There are cauldrons of the boiling stuff being hauled on overhead tracks, open casting molds being filled, centrifuges and other machines in constant operation.

The equipment here is heavy duty, sound, and generally well-tested. It cannot be damaged except by powerful magic and is naturally immune to fire. If it should take damage, there is a percentile chance of catastrophic failure equal to the amount of damage taken. Such failures result in explosions, smoke, and lots of noise, enough to encourage all but the most dim-witted to run like crazy.

7. Lava Scoops

These conveyor belts of buckets are part of the lava transport system. In constant motion, they scoop buckets of the stuff from the basin and dump it into the pumping system. From there it is diverted throughout the citadel to power equipment and provide heating.

Residential Level



Fungus Farms Level

These levels are broad cavern-like areas, hewn out of natural rock. The air stinks of manure and mold, not suprising since much of the waste from the residential levels is pumped here for fertilizer.

Normally calm and peaceful (indeed a favored spot for relaxing contemplation by those who can endure the air), the farms become a clatter of noise and chaos during major harvests, which occur about once a month. Then, the gnomes bring out their favorite machines, new and improved from the last test, and begin a tumultuous attack of steam-powered pickers on the innocent fungus crop they have grown.

1. Elevator Shafts

The twin shafts here are for the up and down elevators that service this level. When one is going up, the other is automatically going down. A sign between the doors lists the arrival time of the next car (3-18 rounds) and also lists the fertilizing schedule for the farm. This last is to serve as a warning for when the muck sprinkler will be turned on.

2. Fungus Fields

The main floor of the cavern is overgrown with stands of highly productive and nutritious mushrooms bred by the gnome myconologists. The mushrooms typically grow three to four feet in height. Narrow paths wind between some fungus patches while in other areas there are broad open areas of ground being prepared for the next spore-sowing. The ground comprising the fungus fields is heavily mucked from the fertilizer sprayers mounted in the ceiling overhead. These sprayers (much like fire sprinklers) release a combination of water and waste, a vital nutrient to the fungus.

3. Reservoirs

These pools contain stagnant, filthy water unfit for drinking. Colorless algaes grow on the surface. Each pool is two to three feet deep. They provide the water needed for the muck sprinklers.

4. Fertilizer Tanks

These metal columns hold waste from the upper levels for use in the muck sprinklers. Any tank that sustains 50 or more points of damage will rupture, flooding a 30 radius area with foul liquid.

5. Water Pipes

These pipes supply water to the reservoir system. They are not under pressure, relying on gravity to move the water from the upper level cisterns. Each pipe can withstand 30 points of damage. If ruptured, a pipe releases a powerful spray of fresh water capable of knocking characters off their feet.

6. Pumping Station

The machines in these areas control the muck sprinklers. Steam operated, the pumping stations mix water and waste, then send it to the sprinkler heads. Amazingly enough, this is one of the few machines the gnomes tend to leave be. They have developed a sound design and someone has been insightful enough to leave it alone ever since.

7. Machine Shop

This large room is the storage area and workshop for the fungus harvesting machines. Parked near the doors are the machines, strange combinations of spider legs, scoops, hands, oversize suits, and even one model that looks like a vacuum cleaner mounted on a pogo stick (it's being dismantled for parts). Behind the equipment are workbenches filled with tools, broken parts, scrap metal, boxes of screws, and half-finished projects. Grease-stained plans are nailed to the walls or buried under junk. A few personal decorations hang from the walls. At the center of the back wall is a small forge for doing simple ironwork.

The machine shop is occupied by 2-8 gnomes (including at least one gnomoi). They are all workmen-engineers and agriculturists.

8. Granary

This hall is piled with carefully sorted stacks of fungus-divided according to size, color, and type. Just inside the door hang several breathers. These aren't necessary so long as the fungus is not disturbed. However if the mushrooms are violently handled, they release choking clouds of spores.

9. Storeroom

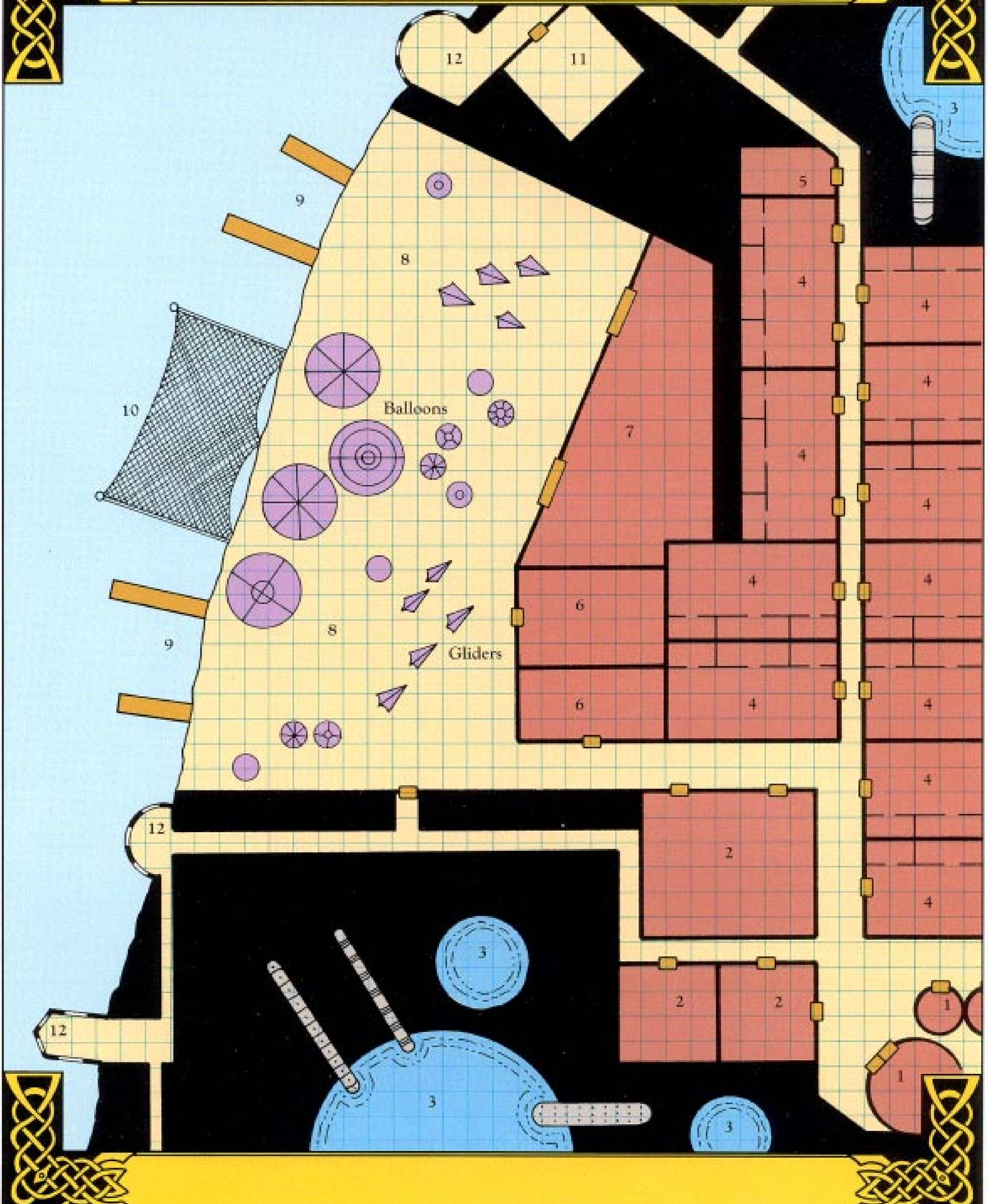
This chamber is filled with an incredible assortment of junk-gears, cogs, u-joints, coils of cable, tubing, sprinkler heads, broken pistons, and more.

10. Sorting Hall

This hall is where the fungus is sorted according to type and spores for new planting are collected. This is one of the few operations the gnomes have deliberately chosen not to mechanize. Despite all their efforts, poisonous fungi still grow in their fields. Not willing to risk the health of their citizens to undependable machines (as challenging as the design project might be), the masters of the citadel require all sorting be done by hand.

The sorting hall is only in use during the brief periods immediately after the harvest. Then there are always 21-40 gnomes present. All wear breathers since the air is thick with fungus spores. Those without such gear cannot even enter the chamber due to the choking clouds.

Armory/Water Cistern Level



Gnome Residential Level

Unlike some other areas of a gnome citadel, the halls and ceilings of the residential areas are scaled to gnome heights. The main passages are approximately 10' wide and have spacious 6′ high ceilings. The majority of passages are only 4½′ high and 5′ wide.

Residential Encounter Table

2	Cultist of Hith
3	Dwarf visitor
4	Gnome nobleman
5	Gnome repair crew
6	Unscheduled test of wall scrubber
7	Pack of gnome teenagers
8	Gnome infant playing
9	Gnome brat
10	Gnome hausfrau
11	Gnome gossip
12	Gnome spinster
13	Gnome workmen coming or going
14	Constables
15	Magistrate and guards
16	Fence
17	Thief
18	Lost minoi inventor
19	Human guest
20	Cultist of Hith

I. Elevators

Like the other elevators throughout the citadel, the system here is a pair of shafts—one going up and the other down. Because of the heavy use of the elevator system, the number of tubes at each elevator station is larger. Posted outside each pair of tubes is a sign listing the scheduled stops for each car going up and down.

The elevator shafts here are equipped with emergency ladders in case of accident. These can be reached by using the trapdoors in the floor and ceiling of each car.

2. Park

Built around the elevator station is a large (by gnomish standards) area of parkland. This is a carefully cultivated expanse of trees, flowers, and grass growing in a bed of natural earth. A system of ducts and mirrors is used to provide natural light from outside. Not only do the plants (and gnomes) get sunlight, but the light shifts, sets, and rises according to the outside world. The gnomes have found this is better for their own mental health and doesn't hurt the plants any.

3. Warren

Most of the space on the residential levels is devoted to the warrens. Each warren forms a separate community from all the others. Within a warren's confines live an entire extended family of gnomes, each usually having a chamber entirely to themselves.

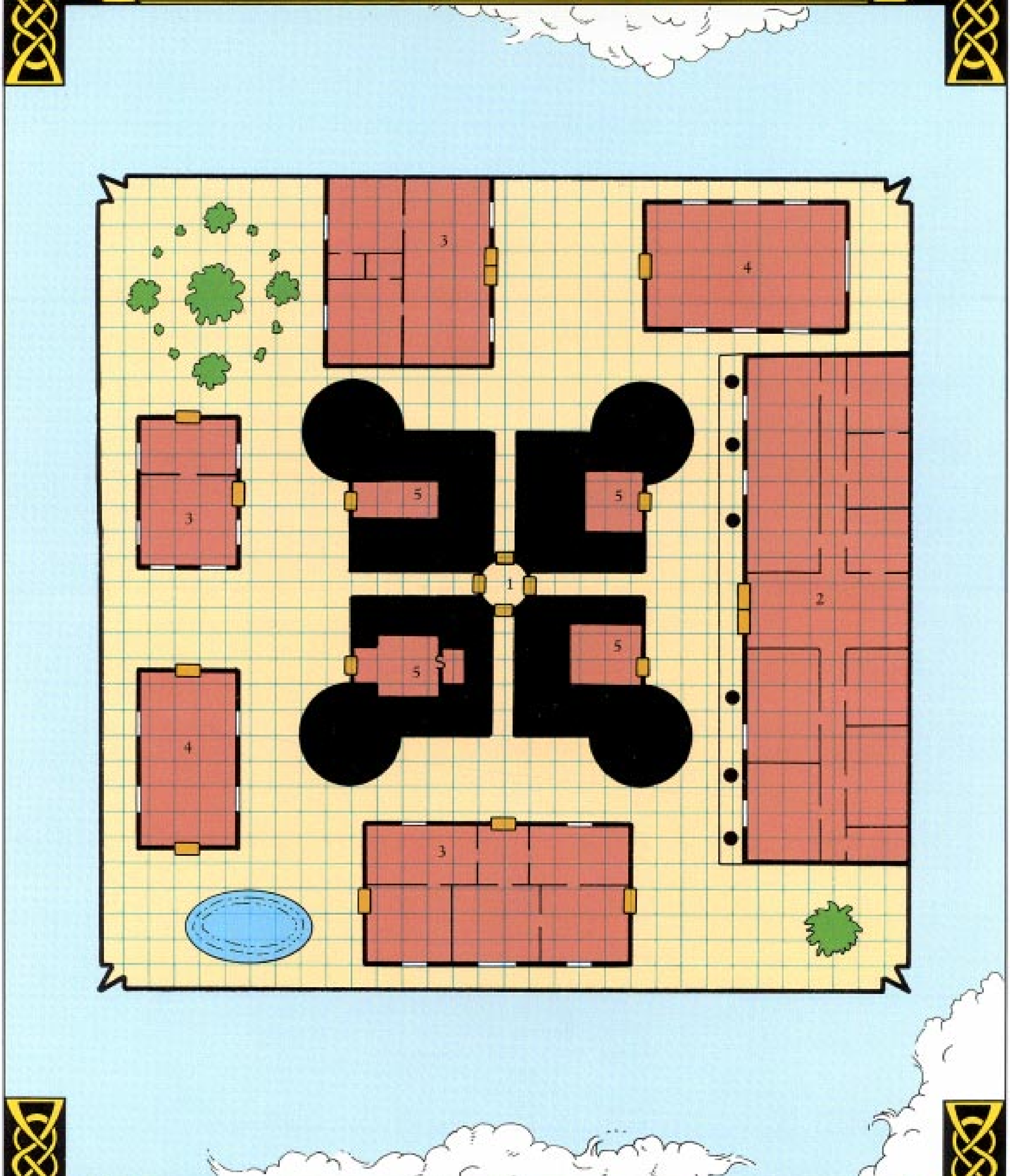
As with all things however, the size and comfort of the warren is determined by the wealth of the family. Small warrens are normally those of small families (new branches of an old family or one that is slowly dwindling in size) or of those that cannot afford anything better. The majority of the warrens are for middle-class gnomes. A few large warrens belong to the wealthy, however, most of the well-to-do gnomes, the nobility, make their homes higher up in the governmental levels.

4. Commons

The commons areas are large meeting halls and markets. Crowded with children and housewives during the day and whole families at night, they are the meeting places for neighbors and friends.

In these areas can be found plants, water cisterns (there is no running water throughout the warrens), waste disposal centers, market stalls, tavern tables, and quiet cozy corners. There is no privacy here, only less notice in some areas. As with all groups, the commons have their cliques, gathered in little corners, excluding others.

Governmental Level



ARMORY/WATER CISTERN LEVEL

1. ELEVATORS

This bank of elevators includes the standard personnel shafts, one always going up and the other down. A sign is posted next to these listing scheduled stops. In addition, there is a special large freight elevator. The car in this shaft is assigned to the armory levels for moving large groups of men and material around in case of attack. Thus, there is a 50% chance the car will be present at any time.

2. ARMORY

These rooms are stocked with the excess weapons of the gnomes. None of the weapons are magical, but there are devices such as lava projectors (empty) and other more bizarre items. There are also suits of good metal armor and shields. All of the equipment is sized for gnomes. The doors are kept locked and the keys are held by the officers in room 5.

3. CISTERNS

These spaces are the bottom sections of the huge water-holding tanks that furnish the citadel with fresh waster. Most of this is collected from rainwater run-off. The openings to these reservoirs can be reached from upper levels.

4. BARRACKS

Each barrack hall houses a squad of twenty gnome warriors and all their personal items. The ceilings are high, almost 10′, to allow for the three-tier bunkbeds needed to quarter all the soldiers. During the day, most of the rooms are empty and all personal possessions are carefully locked away. At night, most are occupied, although at least one squad will be on guard duty in the hanger bay.

5. OFFICERS' QUARTERS

This room houses the junior officers in command of this section. There are 2-5 officers quartered here. Only 0-3 will be present at any given time. Like the men, all personal possessions are carefully locked away. The door to the room is also kept locked if the room is unoccupied.

6. STORAGE

These rooms contain piles of useful gear and unusual junk, a trait that seems common to most storerooms of the gnomes. There are parts for flyers and gliders, rolls of balloon fabric, extra tools, broken gears, bobbins of thread, spools of wire, and mounds of tattered netting in need of repair. No one bothers to lock these doors because nothing here is considered vital.

7. MACHINE SHOP

This machine shop is much like those found on other levels, with long wooden workbenches strewn with tools and current projects. At the back wall is a small forge for blacksmithing. In addition, there are floor to ceiling treadmill-operated sewing machines and an experimental steam-driven armor press (which so far has made more noise and steam than usable armor). Since the war with the fire minions has subsided, work in the shop tends to be slow. Normally, there are only 2-5 gnome workmen present.

8. LAUNCH BAY

This area is a huge, high-ceilinged cave open to the outside. It is from here that gliders, flyers, and war ballons are launched. During the day, the hanger is normally busy with pilots and crews- especially since the nobles have discovered the concept of "sport" flying. During the day there are normally about 3-18 gnomes and assorted vehicles and ballons in the bay.

9. LAUNCHING RAMP

The launching ramps are downward-sloping, slick runways intended to aid flyer and glider pilots in takeoff. They are one of the latest "improvements" in the launch bay. Before, pilots launched themselves by simply leaping off the edge. Now they can build up momentum by taking a short run. Originally the ramps were lightly greased to reduce friction, but this was discontinued after several bad accidents.

10. CATCH NET

A standard feature of all launch bays is the catch net, where gliders are supposed to land. Once upon a time, the gliders attempted to land directly in the bay, however after several messy crack-ups the net method was devised. Now pilots try to touch down in the soft strings of the catch net. Sometimes, experimental improvements are added to the net without adequate notification. The latest of these was the automatic unloader-a trigger that flipped the full net back into the launch bay. After several pilots were suddenly launched into the bay by the system, the apparatus was removed.

11. GUARD ROOM

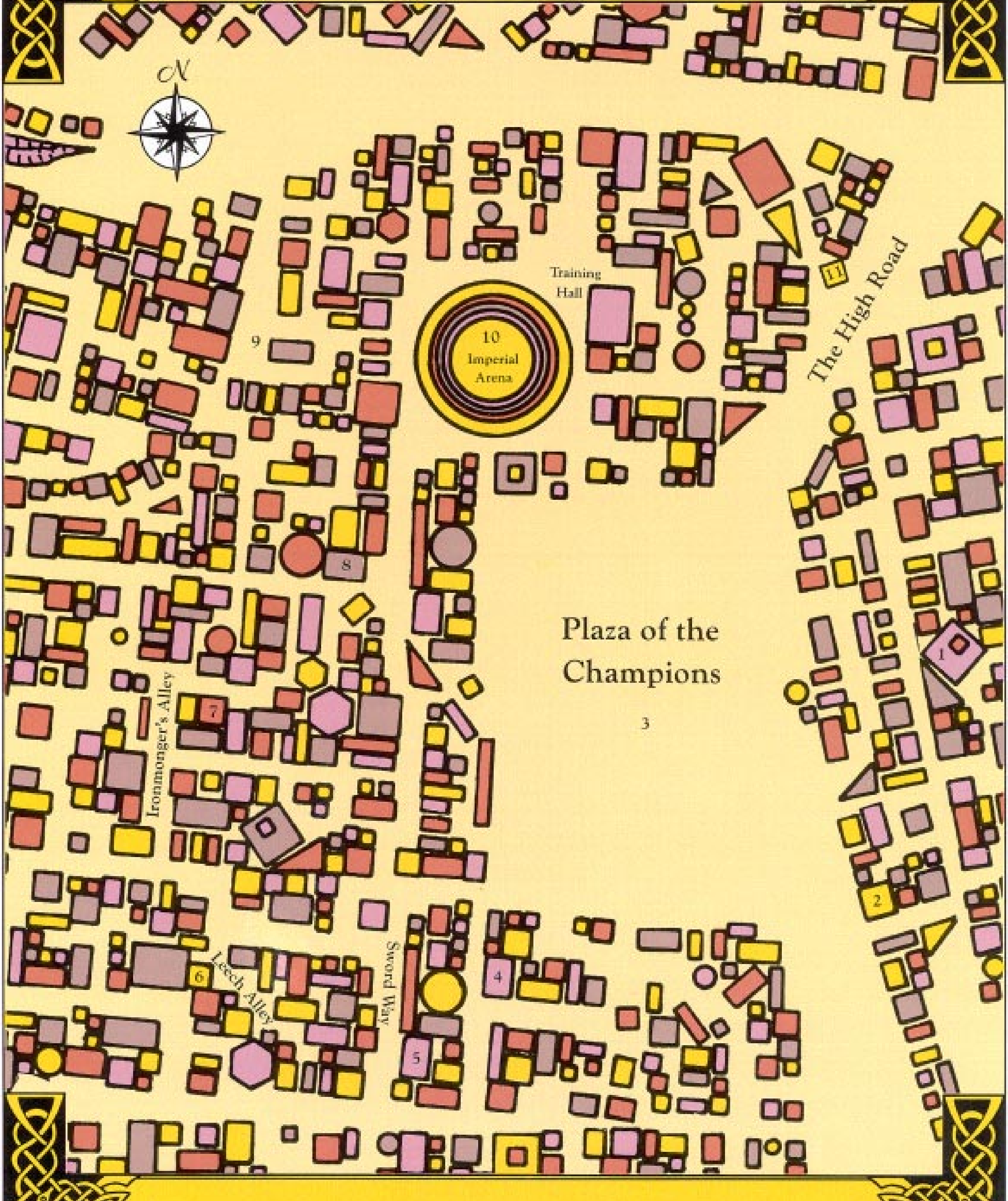
This chamber houses the situation room for the lookout stations. In it is a large table, a desk, and several chairs. On one wall is a large display with numbers hanging on pivots. Each number matches a lookout. If that lookout hits an alarm, a signal bell rings and the number flips over to the other side. There are always two gnome officers and four aides present.

12. LOOKOUT

Each lookout point is occupied by two gnome guards at all times. Their task is to watch the surrounding countryside and signal anything unusual they might see. The job is incredibly boring and most of the gnome guards spend their time napping, playing cards, and reading. Only occasionally do they bother to look out the window.

Each lookout has a signal button. When pressed, it rings a loud alarm bell and alerts the guard room (11) which lookout sounded the alarm.

Plaza of the Champions



City Wharf Key

At the end of the street called The Breakwater lies the city's Sea Gate and the wharf area. Here, cargo ships from all over the known world unload their precious cargos.

1. The Sea Gate Towers

These massive towers guard the Sea Gate, one of the most important trade entrances to the city. Four stories tall, and equipped with powerful bolt throwers, each tower is manned by a full company of regular military troops.

2. Wall Tower

This tower is typical of the defensive towers found at intervals along the city wall. Made of worked stone and armed with bolt throwers and boiling oil, each tower can hold out as an independent fortress for over a month, if need be. The tower walls are more than 15′ thick at the base and four stories tall. Each tower can hold a full company, although the standard peace-time garrison is two to four squads.

3. Customs Office

This building is the administrative center of the wharf area. Port regulations are posted here, as well as the tax office (usually 5%), cargo scales, and shipping schedules. Imperial licenses and routine official paperwork is handled here.

4. Warehouse

Most of the buildings near the docks are warehouses to store goods arriving in Kristophan. These are usually made of wood, and are locked at night to keep out thieves. The district is irregularly patrolled by the Saiones, and private watchmen can also be hired at the local taverns to guard particularly valuable cargoes.

5. Wharf Area Constabulary

This is the wharf precinct headquarters of the Saione constabulary. This sturdy two-story brick building has holding cells for civil offenders. A small tower on the roof allows a view of the docks, and contains a bronze bell that is rung in case of fire or other civil danger.

6. The Barrelstave Pub

This modest establishment is run by Orin Barrelstave of the Fianawar. The dwarf runs a friendly pub, with a famous drinking contest each week. He also keeps a collection of maps and nautical charts, gathered out of curiosity, for use by his friends.

7. Telgran's Dive

This is a dangerous tavern run by Telgran, a renegade elf. The weather-beaten outside matches the dingy, smoke-filled interior. Most clandestine activities can be arranged for here: smuggling, kidnapping, forged documents, bribery. An "understanding" with local authorities prevents the Saiones from closing the tavern down.

8. Master Balthuus' House

Master Balthuus is an ex-sea captain minotaur, now a prosperous merchant. He has a keen nose for a bargain (or a trap) and has built a lucrative import business. He seldom voyages himself any more, but might be persuaded to finance an expedition (for a return of 50% of the profit).

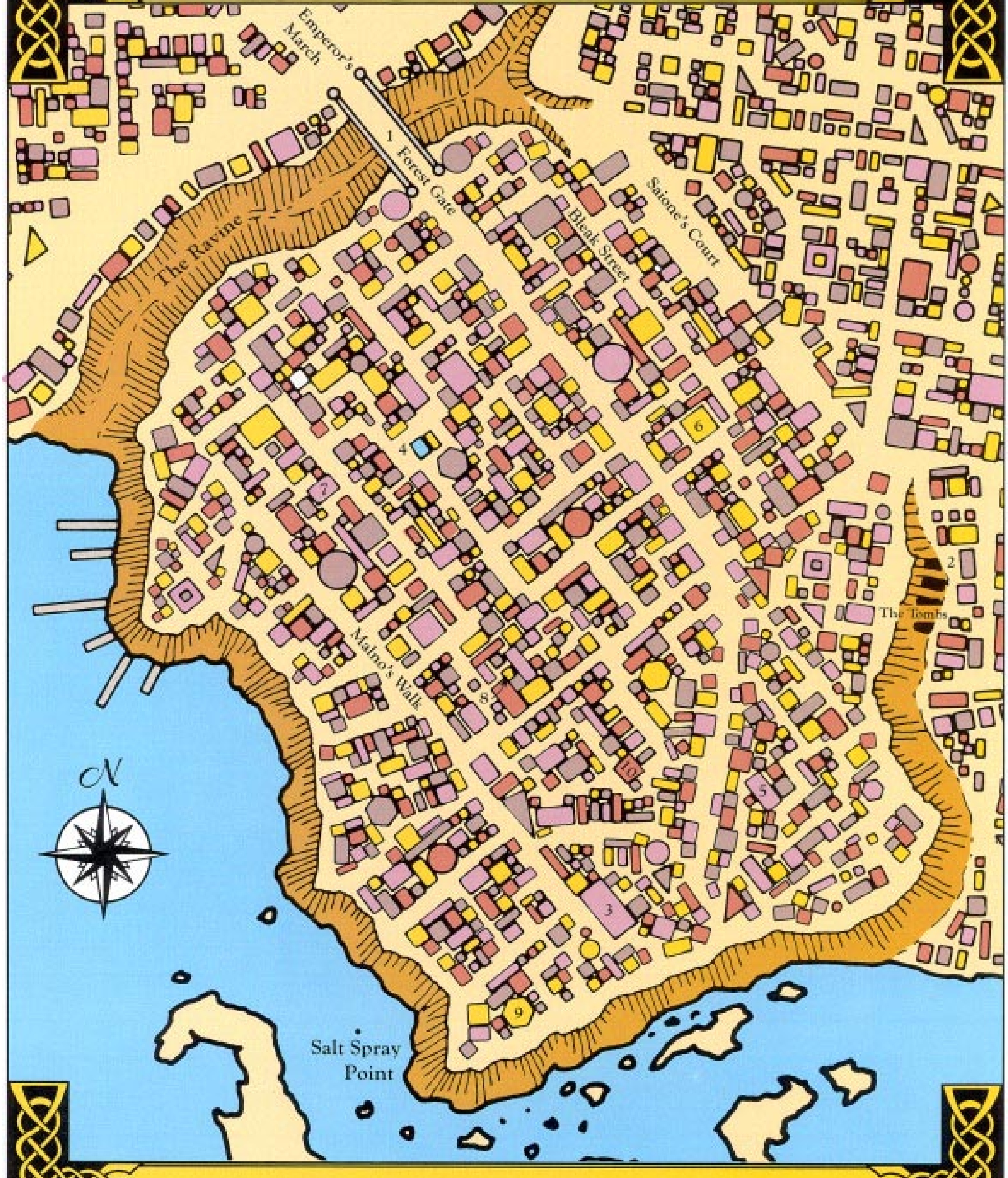
9. Voyager's Inn

Travelers who need accommodations in the wharf area are often directed to the Voyager's Inn, where the rates are reasonable, the beds are soft, and breakfast is provided. The common room has a ship's figurehead, a bull minotaur.

10. Antilla's Grog Shop

Not only is this a well-stocked shop, but Antilla is the foremost information broker in the wharf area. This is the headquarters for the Groggers gang, who have continual run-ins with Telgran's gang. Antilla is a part-time spy for Thenol, and is involved in smuggling contraband and weapons to the Thenolites.

The Old City



Emperor's March
1
Forest Gate
Bleak Street
Saione's Court
The Ravine
6
4
7
2
The Tombs
Malno's Walk
8
5
N
3
9
Salt Spray Point

Reached by means of the High Road, the Plaza of the Champions provides a commons for the inhabitants of Kristophan. The Imperial Arena is nearby, and the area has many small shops that specialize in the making and selling of arms, armor, and other military equipment.

1. East Plaza Constabulary

This is the east precinct headquarters of the Saione constabulary. This sturdy two-story brick building has holding cells for civil offenders. Its armory contains riot control weapons, as well as lethal ones. A small tower on the roof allows a view of the plaza, and contains a bronze bell that is rung in case of fire or other civil danger.

2. The Champion's House

This is a local pub and alehouse on the edge of the plaza. Grakkus Takhad, the owner, is a minotaur and a retired arena trainer (8th level fighter). Although he is well able to take care of the rowdy, there is often no need, for this pub is frequented by off-duty (and out-of-uniform) Saiones.

3. Plaza of Champions

In addition to being the center of the local community, once each year there is a great fair of armorers, weaponsmiths, and ironmongers. At this time rare and unusual examples of their arts may become available. The plaza is also used to stage public punishments, executions, and announcements of imperial decrees.

4. Armorer's Shop

Balthun Obedagh, a dwarf, is the owner and head armorer of this shop. He makes armor to order in up to 60% of the normal time, but the price will range up to 5 times the base cost. He can also repair magical items of up to -3 enchantment, but for this takes payment in favors or magic. He actively intrigues to aid and protect other dwarves.

5. Swordmaster's Shop

The owner, Aristo Aurelian, is a retired champion (level 7 fighter). He can identify any sword of note as if using a *legend lore* spell. He can provide training in most weapons to low level fighters, and has much knowledge concerning the layout and operation of the Arena.

6. Healer's Den

This rather grimy and run-down building houses Malathus, an aged and rheumy-eyed herbalist/ healer. His elixirs are somewhat more known for their bitter tastes and noxious odors than for their effectiveness, and his methods for curing open wounds always include the application of leeches (proficiency success roll: 14). He is a favorite of the trainers at the Arena.

7. Kalinos' House

Kalinos is a dark elf mage of 9th level. Having been scarred and lost an eye in the arena, he ekes out an austere living by selling his talents to whomever can afford them. Embittered and proud, he avoids other elves when possible, having occasionally been hired in plots against them.

8. Smithy

This is the smithy and forge of Kothalus, a massive minotaur smith. He can make most iron items, if rough workmanship is sufficient. He is a careful craftsman, and the strength of his work is quite famous locally. Even the dwarves agree that his work is fair, and though the matter of whose work is superior has yet to be resolved, it has caused some memorable moments in local taverns before the arrival of the Saiones. Although dwarven smiths would sooner see him gone, Kothalus regards the matter with placid indifference.

9. The Armory Market

This building and the square around it is the famous Armory Market, where nearly any weapon, armor, shield or similar equipment can be had for a price. Smaller stalls sell other adventuring equipment and supplies, as well as souvenirs from the arena. When a particularly exciting fight is scheduled, little dolls of the combatants are sold here as well.

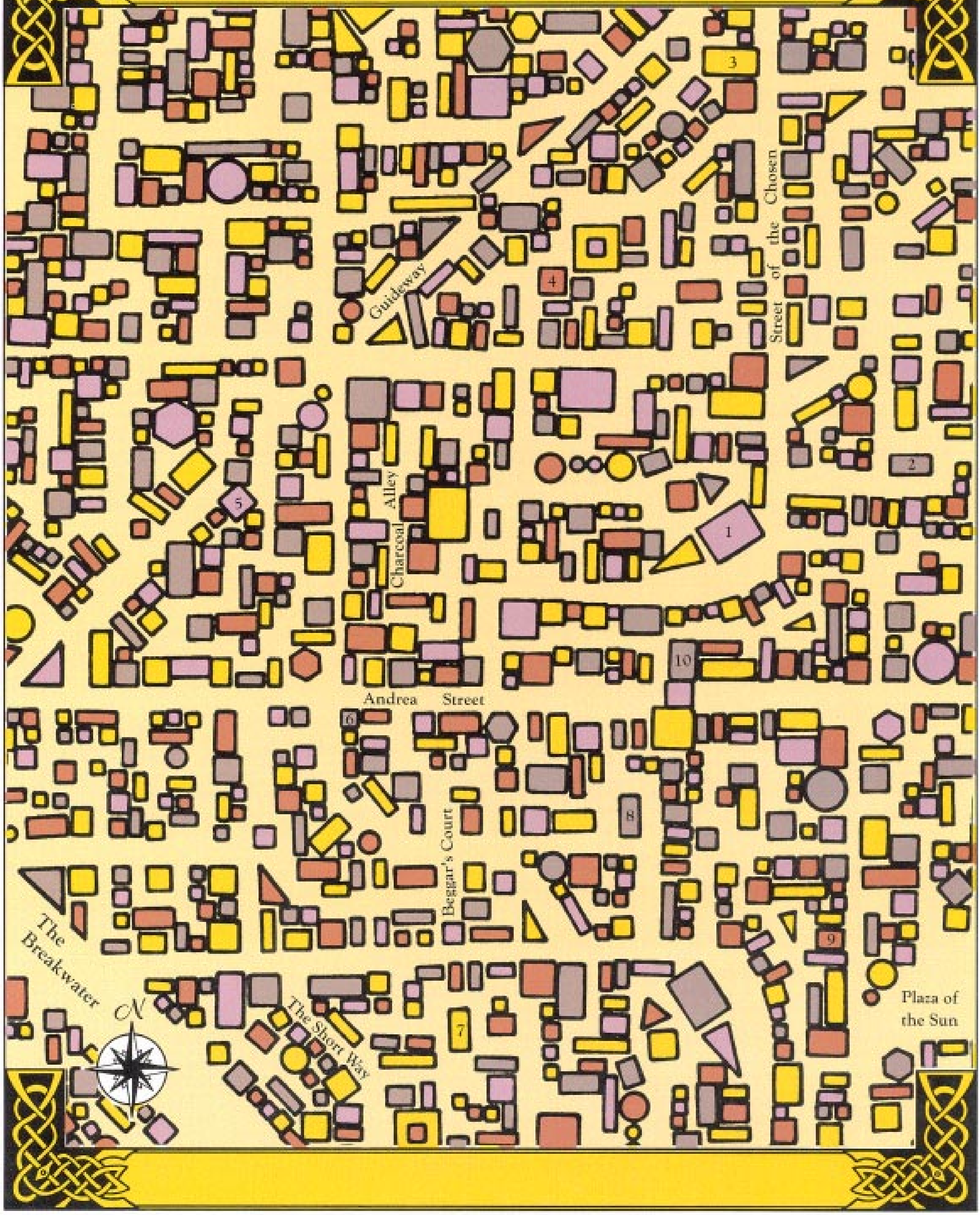
10. The Imperial Arena

This is the site of the major public entertainment. Events range from professional champion trials to the tremendously unequal battles of those guilty of treason and other imperial crimes. At other times this is the site of major festivals for the minotaurs. At such times, the main event takes place within the Arena, which is closed to outsiders following a city-long procession. Non-minotaurs are expected to celebrate in the Plaza of Champions, instead.

11. Tiberion's Emporium

The name of this establishment is somewhat misleading. Tiberion is a money-lender who will convert foreign coins and other valuables into local coinage for only 4%. He also controls the odds for betting on Arena events. He pays both the constabulary and the Old City upright men for protection and restitution, should someone be so foolish as to rob him. It is rumored in less savory surroundings that Tiberion is an expert fence and information broker, but he has never been successfully accused of this.

New City


Guideway
Street of the Chosen
Charcoal Alley
Andrea Street
Beggar's Court
The Breakwater
The Short Way
Plaza of the Sun
N
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10

At the far end of the Emperor's March lies the Old City. Separated from the rest of the city by a steep ravine (known as "The Ditch"), this area, which used to be the core of the city, is now its most dangerous slum. The Saione's do not come here often, and then only in force. However, much of interest to the adventurer can be found here, for a price.

1. The Forest Gate

Though the forest has long since been cut down for timber, this sturdy gate and bridge remain the sole easy access to the Old City. Twin stone towers guard the western end of the bridge, and aside from the Old Armory, these are the only stone structures in the entire Old City. They are manned continually by a strong force of Saione, made more secure, it is said, by secret bribes paid to the upright men. There is much truth to the statement that the towers exist as much to keep the inhabitants in as to protect this area of the city.

2. The Entrance to the Tombs

The openings here lead to a network of catacombs carved from the living rock upon which the Old City rests. For years the catacombs were the final resting place of the dead of the city. Now, only the foolhardy or desperate enter, for the area is shunned by all others.

3. The Old Armory

Although this is the oldest and strongest structure in the Old City, this building appears to be unoccupied. Rumor has that it is the stronghold of a cult of assassins, and that further investigation is unhealthy. Other rumors insist that the armory is a base for the Emperor's secret police, and a detachment of Imperial spies. There is a good chance that this building has a secret connection to the catacombs.

4. The Well

The pavilion surrounding this covered well is recognized by all as neutral ground. The water is unusually sweet and pure. It is believed the well has a powerful magical guardian that wreaks vengeance on those who desecrate or pollute its waters. At times, its waters are rumored to have miraculous healing powers, but the amount of filth and disease in the Old City makes scoffers of most who hear these tales.

5. Theodruses' Hostel

Theodruses is the upright man of the South Quarter. From this building, he runs his gambling, smuggling, fencing, and other criminal pursuits. His gang is quite large, and many of the beggars of the Old City are his eyes and ears. He believes there is enough profit here for everyone.

6. Miranda's Palace

Miranda is the upright man (woman) of the East Quarter. This area is the most prosperous section of the Old City. Gambling and entertainments for the rich, spiced with decadence and a hint of danger can be found here. Behind the glitz is Miranda: brilliantly clever, diabolically beautiful, and quite deadly. Her eventual goal is to influence the Emperor himself.

7. Smuggler's Cove

This rather seedy tavern is actually the headquarters of Euros the Pirate, a retired sea captain and upright man of this section of Old Town. His bluff friendliness and careless shrug when his name or that of his tavern is brought up belies the fact that it's all true. He was and is the most ruthless and blackhearted pirate this side of the gallows, and will not hesitate to betray his best friend at the drop of a hat (full of gold). He controls the smuggling operations that operate through the docks. His men also kidnap the unwary, and sell them into the Imperial fleet.

8. The Oracle

Tucked away in a non-descript building here is the Oracle, an ancient blind crone reputed to have extraordinary powers of divination. Few consult her, for the price is high—and not always measured in wealth or treasure. In fact, it is commonly believed that a curse accompanies her pronouncements, that only the pure of heart or truly daring might avoid. All of the upright men are known to avoid having anything to do with her or those she guides.

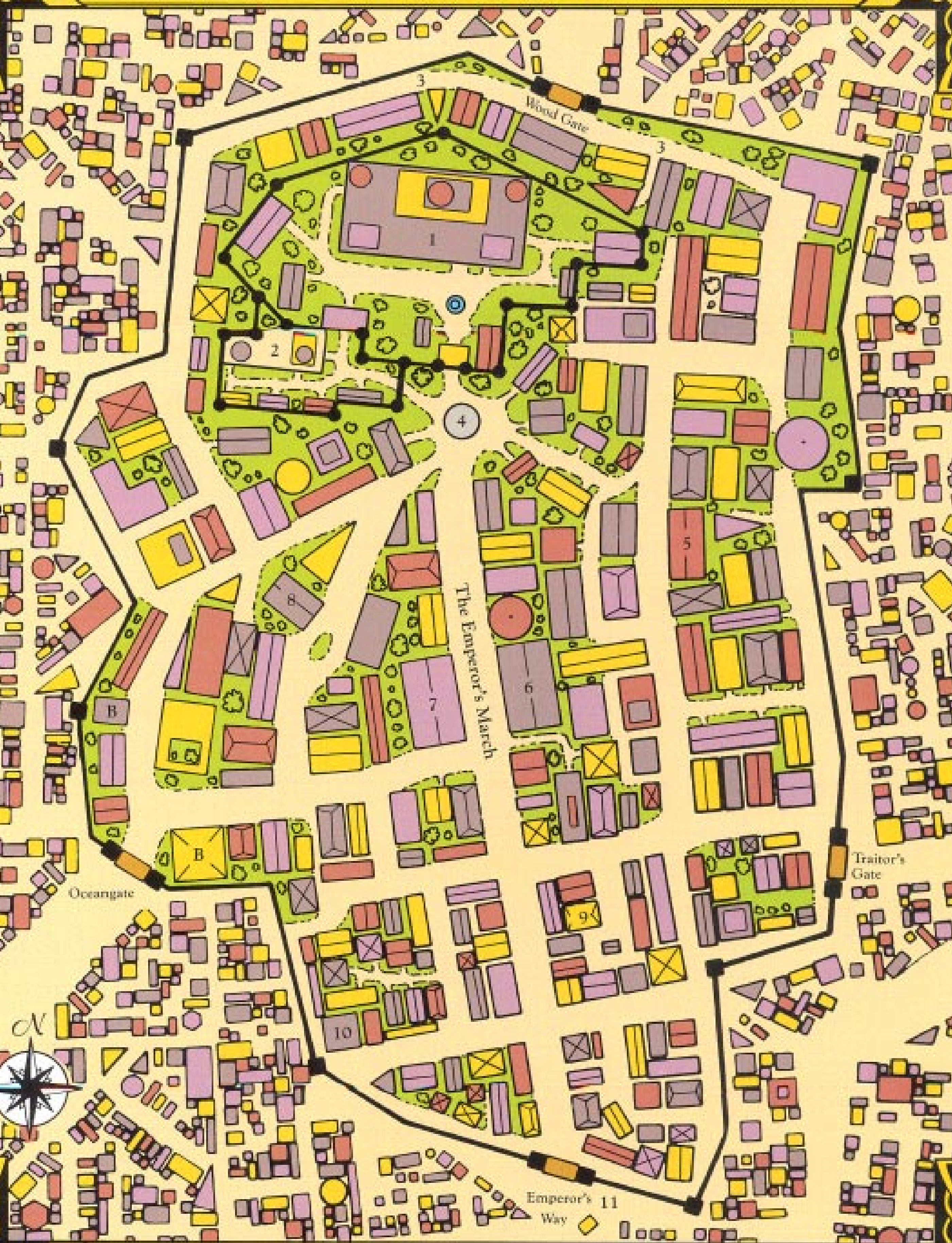
9. The Golden Palace

This tawdry inn is the headquarters for one of the lower class thieves' gangs: the Blades. The pickings in this area are poor, mostly adventurers down on their luck and paupers who can't afford to live in a better part of the Old City. The only place worse to live than this area is The Cauldron, which lies just to the west. The Cauldron blocks house the deranged, the diseased, and the dying-the worst and most wretched jetsam of Kristophan.

10. Reorx's Forge

This tavern is the center of a small dwarven community in the bowels of the Old City. Its house specialty is a fiery local brew called Reorx's Fire. The tavern also serves as the headquarters for the Vipers, a local gang that often battles the Blades. A short distance away is the house of Master Istophanes, a reclusive wizard who stays here for reasons of his own. This area is a lower class area, but still considered better than the blocks to the north.

Imperial City



THE NEW CITY

The New City is a cosmopolitan collection of races and businesses engaged in the commerce that makes this city the center of its world. The wealth of the New City has been built by the local merchant class, in spite of the arrogant opposition of the nobility and the stifling maze of bureaucratic regulation.

1. The Stone Bull

From its location on the Street of the chosen, this three story brick inn dominates the local scene. All races are welcome, if they look reputable and can pay, and uniformed minotaurs attend the doors to keep out riffraff and potential troublemakers. It is rumored that the Emperor's Suite has in fact been used by members of the Imperial household incognito.

2. Market of the Chosen

This building and the block around it contain many stalls and small shops that provide a variety of good quality merchandise: clothes, food, spices, crafted gifts, tapestries, imported goods, and curiosities. Scribes and notaries may also be found here.

3. Guide Hall

This hall provides services for those new to town. Not only guides can be hired here, but so can palanquins, chariots, bodyguards, lantern bearers, and other general escorts. Services can be bought by the day or special arrangements can be made. The building also doubles as the precinct firehouse and contains pumpwagons and other special equipment.

4. Alchemist's Shop

Most common herbs and spices can be bought here, as well as most common spell components. The proprietor, Lithlanian Karilon, an elf, is a healer and herbalist licensed by the city. He has an experimental laboratory in the back of the shop, and pays well for unusual or rare components.

5. Snurrin's Emporium

Snurrin is a gnome and and expert gemcutter. He sells jewelry, gems, and metal items of delicate craftsmanship. He creates jewelry and objects of fine gold, silver, and even platinum. He is a licensed appraiser. His fees range from 2% to 10%, depending on the job, and he has been known to finance expeditions to recover rare gems.

6. Hiram's Bookshop

Hiram deals in books new and old, scrolls, maps, parchments, and other written items. He is skilled at detecting forgeries and deciphering maps. His usual patrons are wizards in search of rare tomes and nobles with a love of learning. He dislikes loud noises and is especially suspicious of kender.

7. Marcus Theatre

This sturdy building was converted from an old armory. It currently serves as a local theatre supported by the upper middle class. Other small shops and theatres surround it, but this is the most prestigious establishment in this part of the New City. Plays from the Imperial Palace soon find their way here.

8. The Belltower

This is another armory that has been converted to public use. The lower two floors are a civic museum, with displays about the history of the city and its emperors. Above this is the bell tower itself, with its great brazen bell. A watch is kept over the city from the tower (primarily against fire). Each hour the great bell is rung to mark the passage of time.

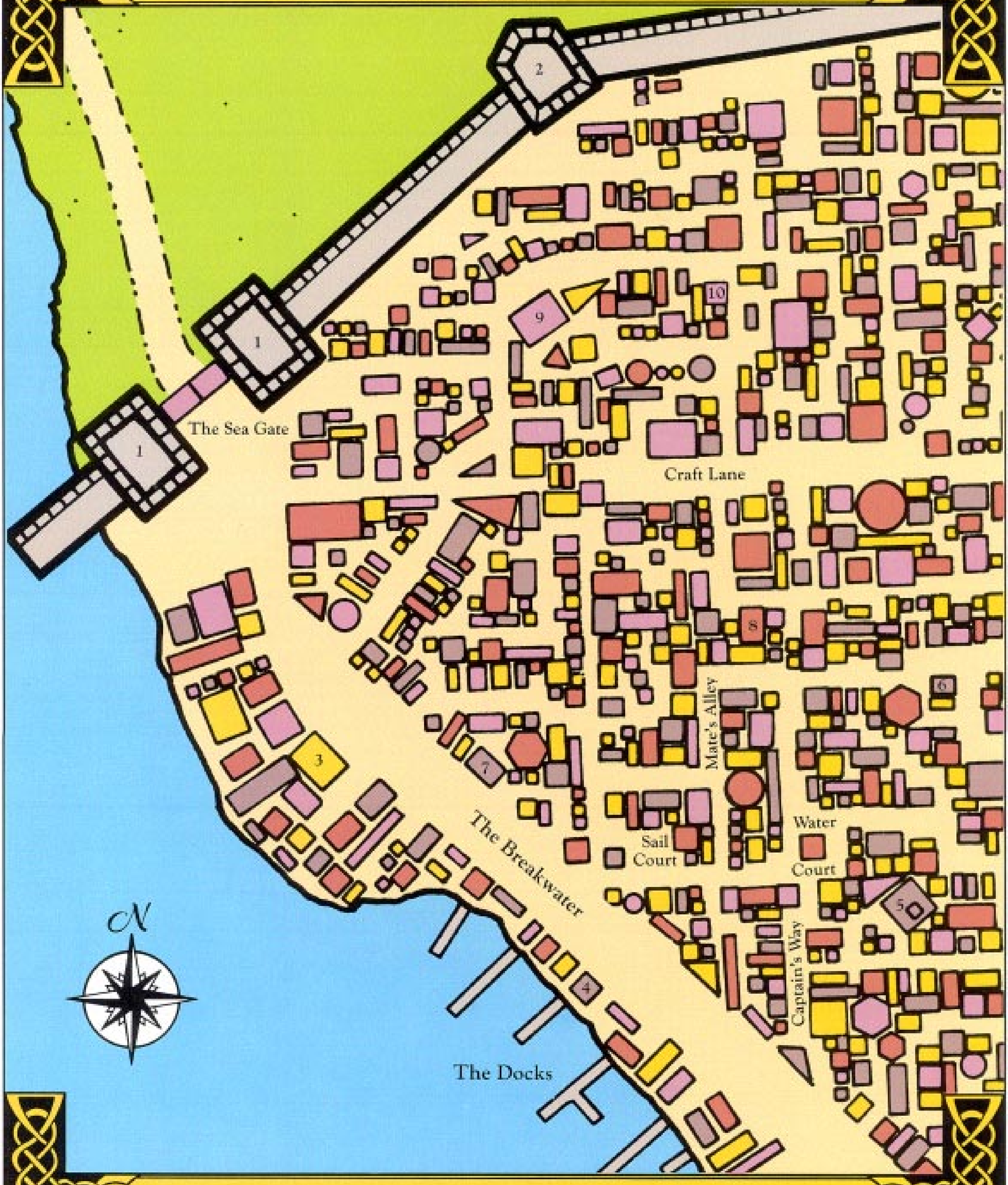
9. Nosarilus' House

Norsarilus is a successful upper middle class wizard, retired here after a successful adventuring career. He now spends his time writing the occasional scroll or instructing the odd student. Recently, however, he has embarked on a new activity: an inquiry to see if the disciplines of astronomy and astrology can be reconciled. Materials relating to his study will be of great interest to him. Norsarilus is politically neutral, but has little time for the elaborate manners and posturing of the nobility.

10. The Hall of Gracchus

This is an upper middle class gaming hall. Gambling in polite society, fine food, and private conference rooms are all available. There is also a fine collection of mosaics, sculptures, and other art objects available for viewing by the well-to-do clientele. This is a good place to make political connections, as it is frequented by the nobility and bureaucracy alike.

Waterfront



The Sea Gate
Craft Lane
Mate's Alley
Sail Court
Water Court
Captain's Way
The Breakwater
The Docks
N
1
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10

The Imperial City

At the far end of the Emperor's March lies the Imperial City with its Imperial Palace. The Imperial City is mostly a private enclave of the minotaur nobility. The Imperial City also contains the important Ministries, the Treasury, and the less important Senate, as well as the beautiful private villas of the nobles.

1. The Imperial Palace

The Imperial Palace houses the Emperor and contains the offices of his inner council. In addition, there are extensive walking gardens and a vast library. The area is guarded night and day by an ordu of Black Cloaks, and is well warded against astral or ethereal intrusion as well.

2. Empress's Palace

The Empress's Palace contains the private chambers of the Empress, her court, and the royal heirs. A secret passage leads from this area to a hidden opening beyond the walls of the city. Deep below the Empress's Palace is a dungeon where political prisoners are imprisoned and forgotten.

3. Barracks of the Black Cloaks.

Here is quartered an entire legion of Black Cloaks. In addition to being the elite striking force of the army, they are responsible for the personal safety of the Emperor and the security of the inner city. Additional guardposts, armories, and barracks areas are marked B.

4. Statue of Sargonnas

This huge bronze statue of Sargonnas rises 30′ above the central plaza. Legend states that in time of need the statue will animate and destroy the enemies of the city.

5. Lord Murgharl's Villa

This is the fine brick villa of the Lord Murgharl, a distant relative to the Emperor. Behind its high walls lies a beautiful ornamental garden, with a cool fountain and placid pool. There is also a private steam bath and training grounds, for the lord keeps his combat skills honed. The Lord Murgharl dislikes non-minotaurs, and would see the Imperial City and Black Cloaks closed to them.

6. Treasury

This massive stone building is heavily guarded and magically warded against astral or ethereal intrusion. The interior is an intricate maze forbidden to non-minotaurs. In addition to the gold reserves and military war chest, the treasury also has facilities for minting coin of the realm.

7. Senate

The sturdy columns and tall arches of this building make it an architectural landmark of the Imperial City. Here, the august members of the nobility discuss the weighty matters of empire and make recommendations to the Emperor. In fact, the body has little power, but remains a hotbed of intrigues, most of which are aimed at reducing the power of the bureaucracy and ministries.

8. Matron Ouguhra's Villa

The Matron Ouguhra is the widow of one of the great lords of the city and matriarch of an entire clan of arrogant young nobles. Her goal is to hold the family together while advancing the family status. As her charges are both headstrong and active, she spends most of her time trying to cover their infractions of imperial law.

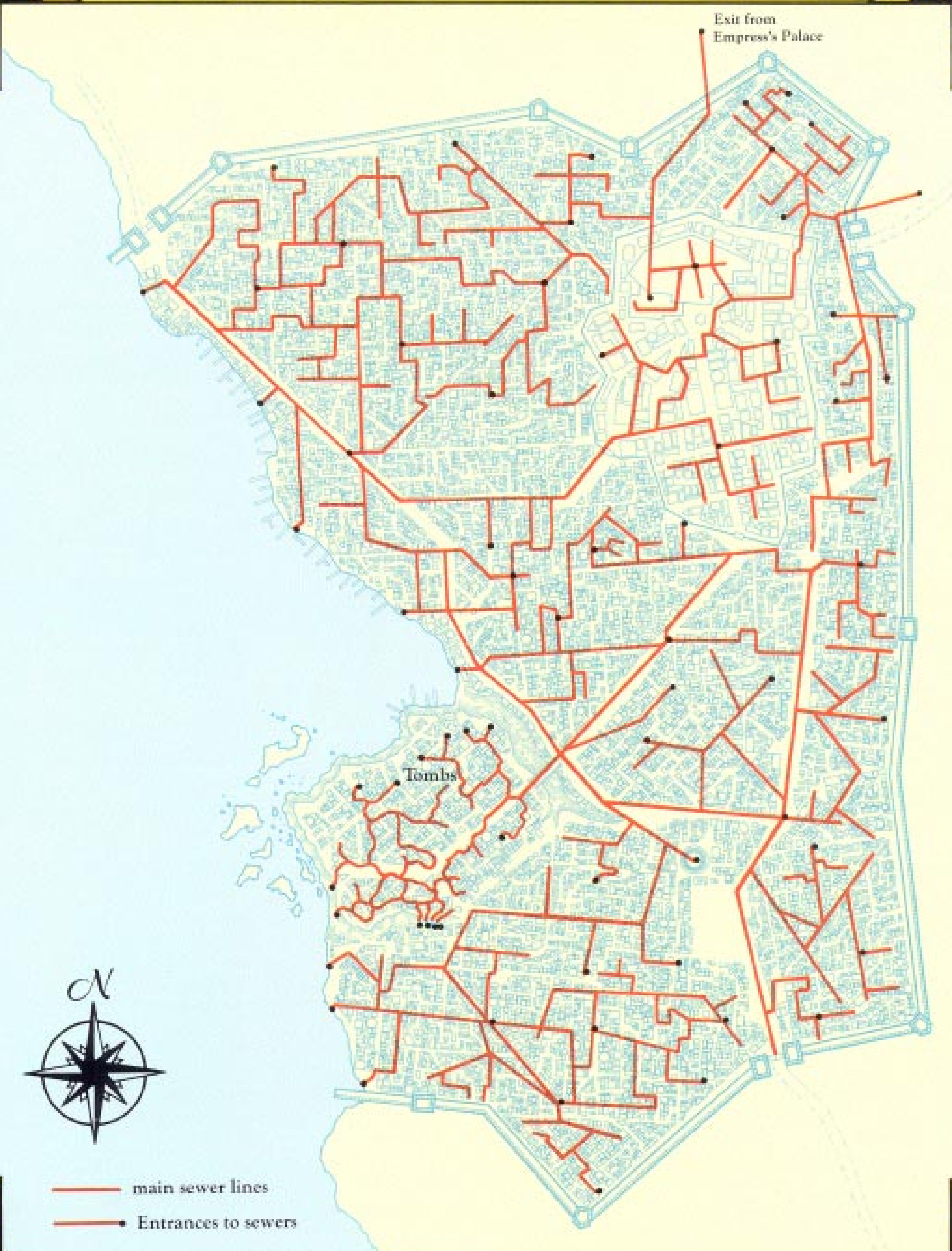
9. Kallides' Villa

The renown tutor Kallides was granted this villa for service to the Imperial Throne. He is an ally of the Empress and of Matron Ouguhra, and spends much time instructing the sons and nephews of the latter. He is also a part-time consultant at the Ministry of Education and has served at times as an unofficial ambassador for the Empress.

10. Partucha's Villa

This villa is typical of the lesser nobility, with an interior courtyard behind high walls. Partucha is a protoge of Lord Murgharl and the brother of a regimental commander of the Black Cloaks. He has connections with the Imperial Secret Service, connections he intends to employ to rise quickly. He is toying with the idea of hatching a revolt in the Old City, to be crushed with his own indispensable aid, but has taken no action yet.

Sewers and Tunnels of Kristophan



The Fisheries, Neron, Baltch, and the Oceans

THE FISHERIES

2	Ant swarm
3	Megalo-centipede
4	Black dragon
5	Giant crab
6	Shark men raiding party
7	Crocodile
8	Leopard
9	Payan Mako fishermen
10	Warthog
11	Payan Mako hunters
12	Leech swarm
13	Giant leech
14	Land lamprey
15	Gargoyles
16	Dragonfish
17	Elf hunting party
18	Bronze dragon
19	Dragon turtle
20	Kelpie

AURIM

2	Adventurers
3	Bulette
4	Blue dragon
5	Brass dragon
6	Copper dragon
7	Gargoyle
8	Giant lizard
9	Wild dogs
10	Wild boars
11	Hobgoblin raiding party
12	Hobgoblin raiding party
13	Hyena
14	Traag draconian raiding party
15	Griffon
16	Hill giant
17	Hippogriff
18	Leucrotta
19	Red dragon
20	Fire lizard

SPIRE MOUNTAINS

2	Fire minions
3	Hell hounds
4	Salamander
5	Hobgoblin war party
6	Merchant caravan
7	Gnome exploration party
8	Manticore
9	Huge scorpion
10	Small mammal
11	Ogre
12	Huge spider
13	Brown porcupine
14	Poisonous snake
15	Giant porcupine
16	Falcon
17	Hippogriff
18	Choke creeper
19	Fire lizards
20	Sylph

NERON

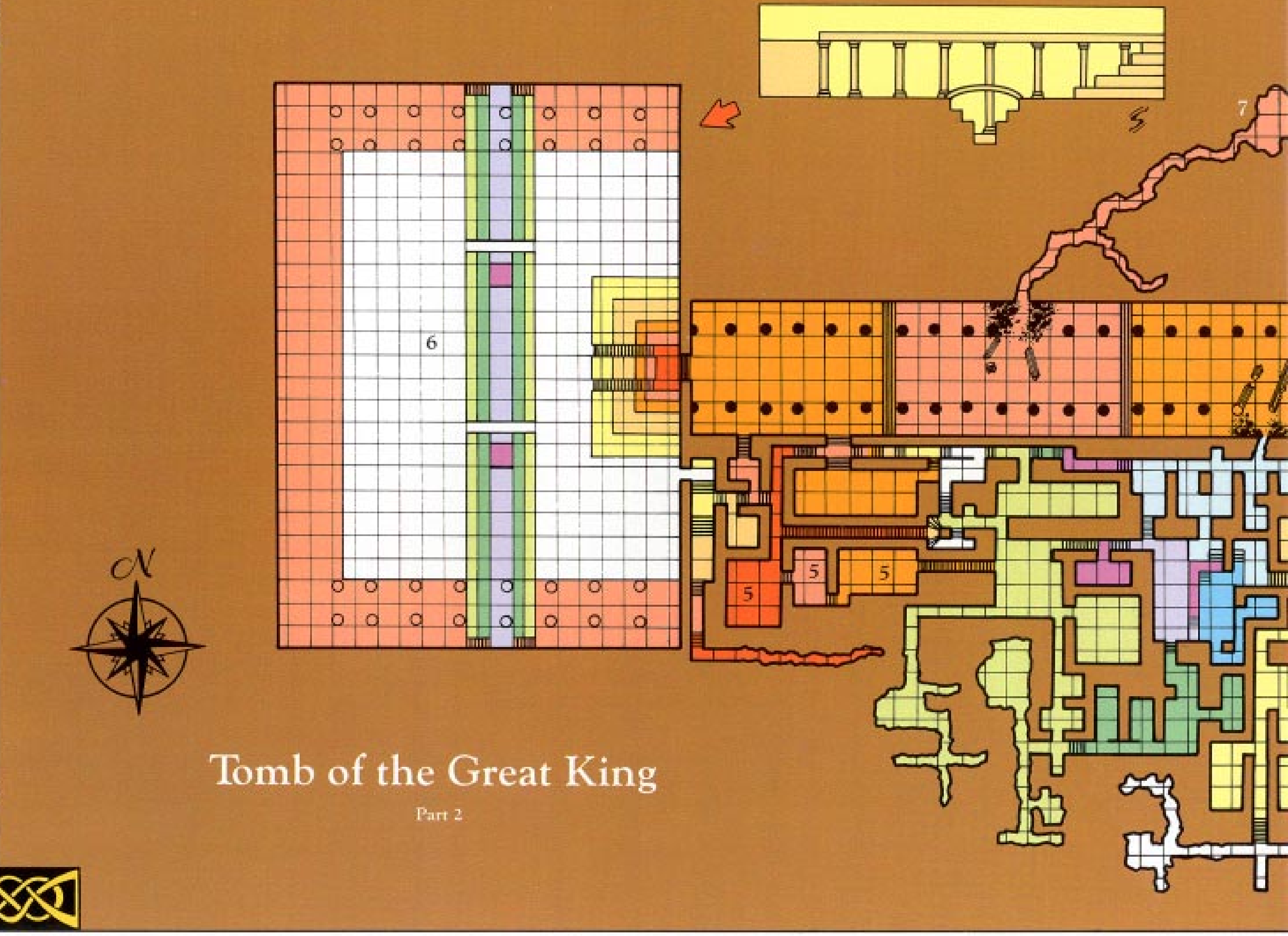
2	Ant swarm
3	Red dragon
4	Black dragon
5	Yaggol
6	Carnivorous ape
7	Rhinoceros beetle
8	Leopard
9	Warthog
10	Giant wasp / Giant hornet
11	Minotaur lizard / Obliviax
12	Monkeys
13	Giant rats
14	Large hawk
15	Giant scorpion
16	Fire giant
17	Aborigines
18	Blood hawks
19	Nereid
20	Mantrap

RAINWARD ISLES

2	Green dragon
3	Red dragon
4	Stone giant
5	White dragon
6	Dwarf merchant
7	Militia
8	Human merchant
9	Cattle
10	Peasants
11	Wild boar
12	Bats
13	Black bear
14	Badger
15	Brown bear
16	Giant eagle
17	Elf party
18	Ettercap
19	Silver dragon
20	Hobgoblin raiding party

HITEHKEL

2	Hell hound
3	Fire giant
4	Gnome fire fleet
5	Efreeti
6	Fire elemental
7	Fire minions
8	Fire minions
9	Lava geyser
10	Lava geyser
11	Lava geyser
12	Cooling land island
13	Cooling land island
14	Salamander
15	Fire snake
16	Fire snake
17	Hell hound
18	Gnome fire fleet
19	Red dragon
20	Groaning spirit



6
5
5
5
7
N
Tomb of the Great King
Part 2

The Tomb of the Great King: General Key

This key is not a complete encounter description for the tomb of the Great King. It does not provide information about monsters and treasures, or even the purpose of the Great Tomb, who is buried there, or where it is located. This is to allow you the opportunity to create and customize the tomb so it will best fit into your campaign.

The key does provide general descriptions of some areas of the tomb. These are provided to help you in creating your own adventures.

1. Entrance

The tomb is carefully concealed from casual inspection, since it was not meant to be easy to find. Cut into the side of a cliff face, all that shows it is here are the two heavy stone doors to the outside world. Even these are difficult to see, as the granite work is carefully concealed to look natural.

2. The Grand Hall

This huge hall way is lined with carved pillars on either side. Each pillar is an instructive scene, from legends long since forgotten. The carving twines around the pillar, reaching from floor to ceiling. A few of the pillars have been broken off and now lie tumbled in the center of the hall.

The walls to either side are covered with frescoes. These, too, depict scenes, although in this case they appear to be episodes from the Great King's life. They are badly chipped and faded and the damage makes many of them incomprehensible.

3. Monks' Quarters

This area appears to be a block of monks' cells. Apparently they were intended for holy men who would pray for the departed king.

4. Preparation Halls

These rooms contain lavishly decorated minor altars to various deities who needed to be honored in the process of interring the Great King. In addition, the walls of other chambers are devoted to frescoes detailing the steps needed to prepare the Great King's body for burial.

5. Treasure Chambers

These rooms were evidently prepared to hold the goods needed by the Great King in his next life. They may or may not be filled with fabulous treasures, although if they are, most of these riches are certain to be extremely fragile and near impossible to transport. Furthermore, if the treasure rooms are filled, any tomb robbers will have to overcome a number of deadly traps and tricks to get to them.

6. Great Hall

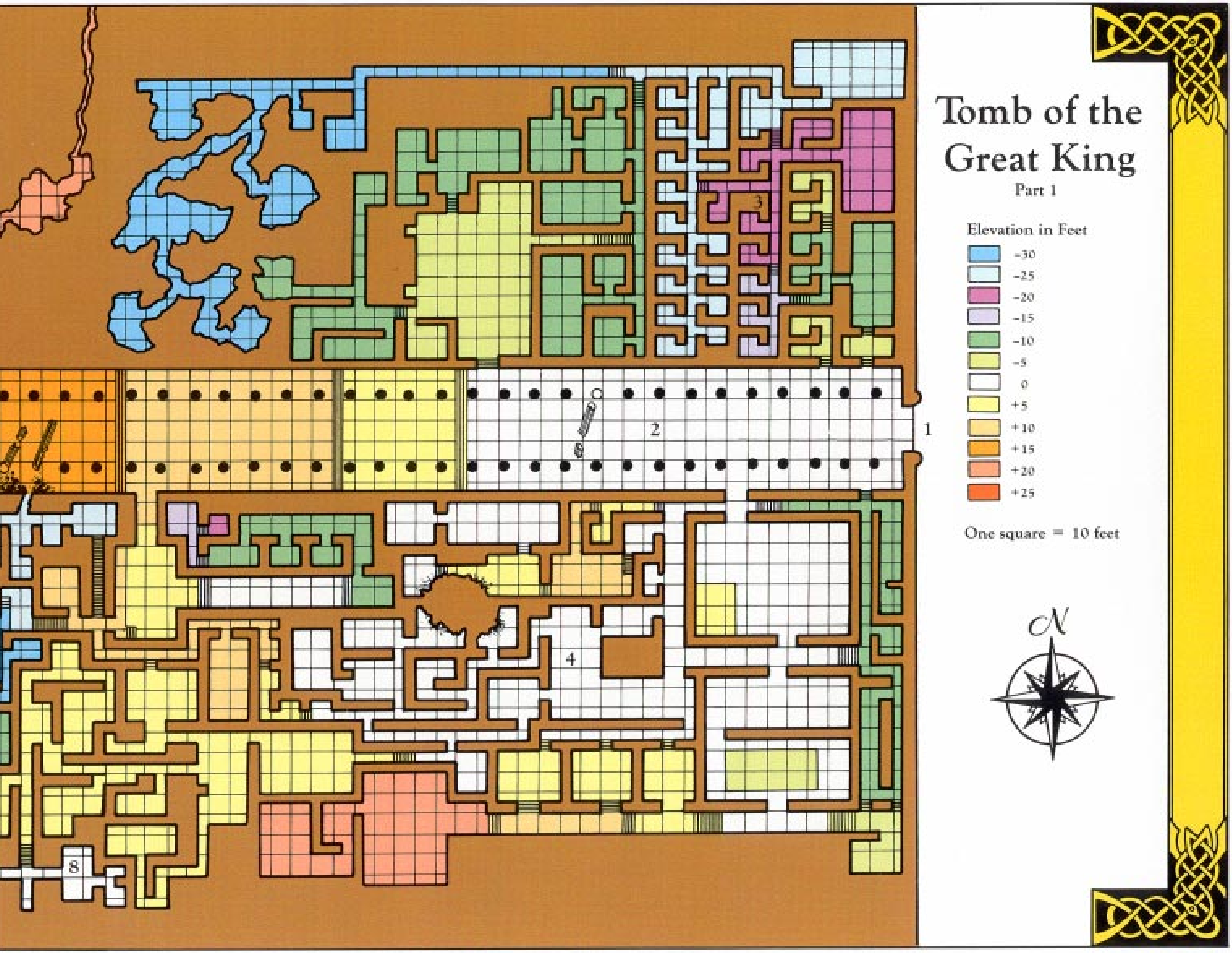
This massive chamber appears to be the burial hall of the Great King. Indeed there is a huge gilt sarcophagus at the far end. However, it is all a sham. The sarcophagus does not contain the Great King but is a deadly trap designed to destroy any who would molest the king's body.

7. Break-In

This tunnel passage leads to the outside world, although it might first pass through the lair of some creature or guardian. The tunnel might have been made by grave-robbers or it could be the work of some dangerous tunneling creature(s) that now roam throughout the complex.

8. Tomb of the Great King

Here in a small side chamber is the true resting place of the Great King. It has been deliberately set in this out-of-the-way location to foil grave robbers. The sarcophagai, while not huge, is expensive and quite valuable. Of course, taking it would make the player characters grave robbers, no matter what their noble intentions might be.


Tomb of the
Great King
Part 1
Elevation in Feet
−30
−25
−20
−15
−10
−5
0
+5
+10
+15
+20
+25
One square = 10 feet
N
1
2
3
4
8

Tomb of the Great King

Prior to the destruction of Aurim by the mighty forces of the Cataclysm, the people of Taladas were on the verge of becoming a great civilization. While the Cataclysm changed all that, it could not eradicate every trace of these ancient people.

The Tomb of the Great King is one example of the level of civilization achieved by these Aurimites. It is believed to be the burial chamber of either the sixth or seventh Hlafdae (the ancient term for High King) of Aurim.

However, all this is uncertain, for the tomb has never been found. There are tantalizing hints of its existence and construction in some of the few works that survived the ravages of Hiteh's Night. From these fragments a few sages have created a theory of what the tomb must have looked like. Greedier or more ambitious individuals have used those same clues to try to find the location of the tomb, which they are convinced is filled with untold riches. Naturally, it is quite likely filled with untold terrors, too. Indeed, some may have already found it and not lived to tell of their success.

As is the case with most lost wonders, the stories associated with the Tomb of the Great King have made it into something even greater than it actually is. The tales and legends associated with it are quite fanciful. If it weren't for fact that many other legends and myths have been proven true over the years, these stories could easily be dismissed as tales for children. Some of these stories are described below.

The Return of the Great King

Somehow, the idea has taken hold in some groups that the Age of Aurim (as the pri-cataclysmus is sometimes called) was a time of perfect wonder, a blessed steel age in which there was no want or hardship. To anyone who has studied the ancient documents, this is patently not true. However, it is easy to see how those of today—living through the hardship and suffering of the post-cataclysmic world—would see any other time as glorious and better.

Whatever their rationale, these tell the tale of the wise Great King who once ruled Aurim. Sensing his death to be near, he had built a great tomb in the mountains. There, with the aid of his priests, he had himself interred—but he did not die. Instead, knowing there would be a time when he was needed, he sleeps until a hero comes to wake him. When he does, the King will use his great power and wisdom to usher in a new Steel Age. Or at least, thus speak the storytellers.

The Crown of Grathanich

This tale is much simpler and less transcendant than the first. It's popular with adventurers and is often told to the willing (or gullible) in many an inn or tavern.

It, too, tells of the Great King of Aurim and how he ruled with power and majesty. He was wise and had immense power—power that came from the strange crown he wore, a crown fashioned from the stuff of Grathanich, the infamous magical stone created by Reorx. With this crown he was able to work miracles unheard of either before or since.

As said, this king was wise. Sensing that he was going to die, the king ordered a tomb to be built hidden deep in the mountains, well-protected and fortified. Here he went to spend his last days, using the power of his crown to wipe the memory of this place from all mankind. He was determined that no one else would wear the crown, because he knew how dangerous its power could be. Only barely he had avoided its corrupting and evil influence; others would not be so strong. Sadly, he knew it was better for this great device to be lost forever.

The Eternal King

This tale is much darker and bleaker than all the others. It, too, tells of a Great King of Aurim, but he was not wise or beloved by his people. Instead, he was evil incarnate, a fiend more powerful than could be believed. Several times he was forced to crush rebellions by the peasants he cruelly oppressed, exterminating entire villages in vengance. His evil was said to be incredible and unstoppable.

Indeed, this is what a secret group of his own advisors realized. They knew that even in death he would continue to ravage and destroy the land. For the good of the Empire, they secretly constructed a mighty tomb. Terrible enchantments were blasted into the very rock. Finally, it was finished.

Somehow (the story is never very clear about this) the loyal advisors lured the malignant Great King into the halls of the tomb they had built. While they were inside with him, their followers, heeding the commands they had been given, sealed the entrance and bound it with magical seals. The Great King was trapped inside forever-but the advisors had sacrificed their own lives, too. They had condemned him to eternal imprisonment and had condemned themselves to horrible death.

The tomb is still out there (so the story goes), guarded by an ancient clan from the days before the Cataclysm. Should anyone find and open its doors, they would release an evil to match perhaps even Hiteh, an evil free to roam the world again.

Which tale is true? Are any of them true? No one knows and the answer may never be learned.

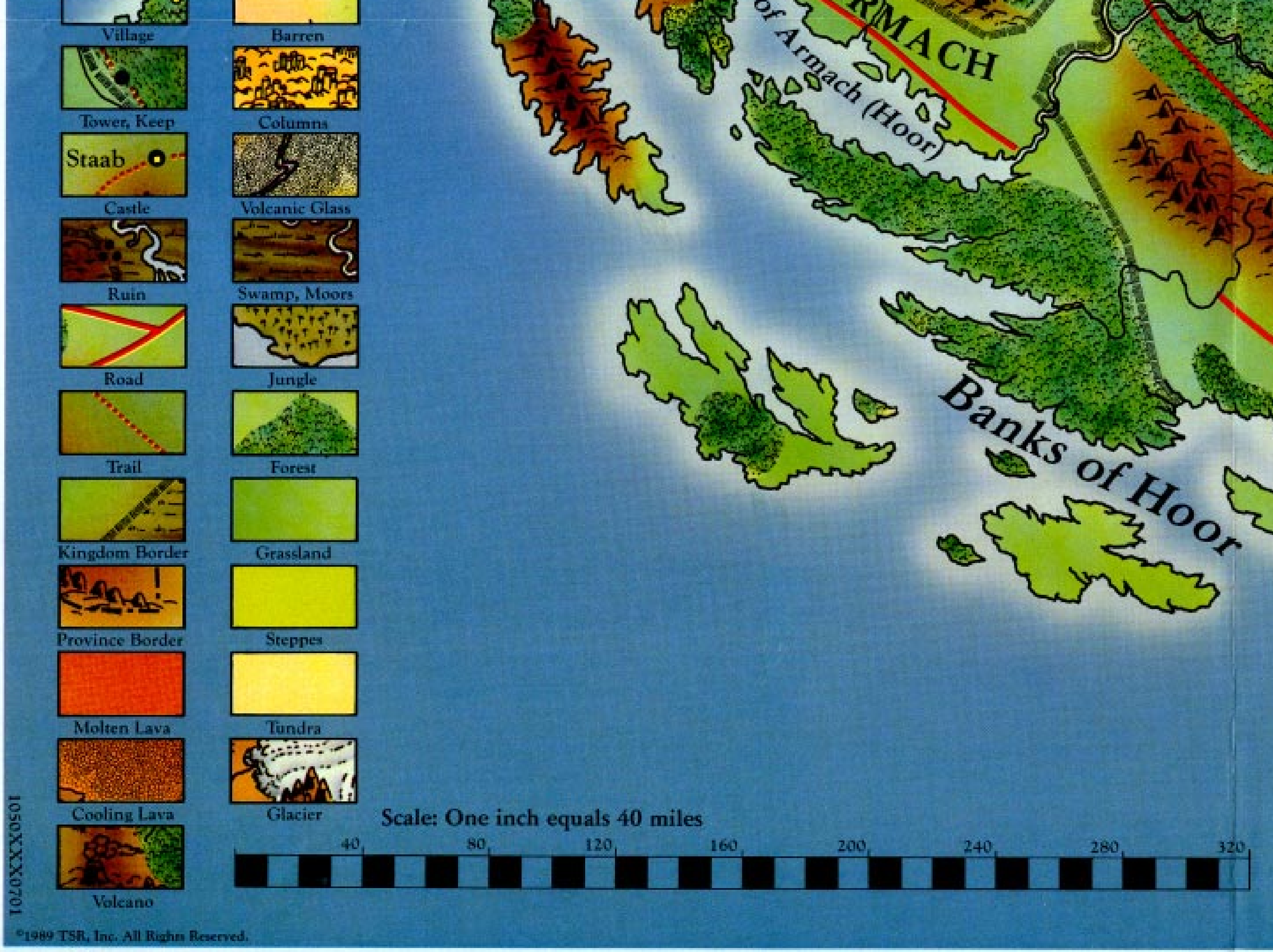


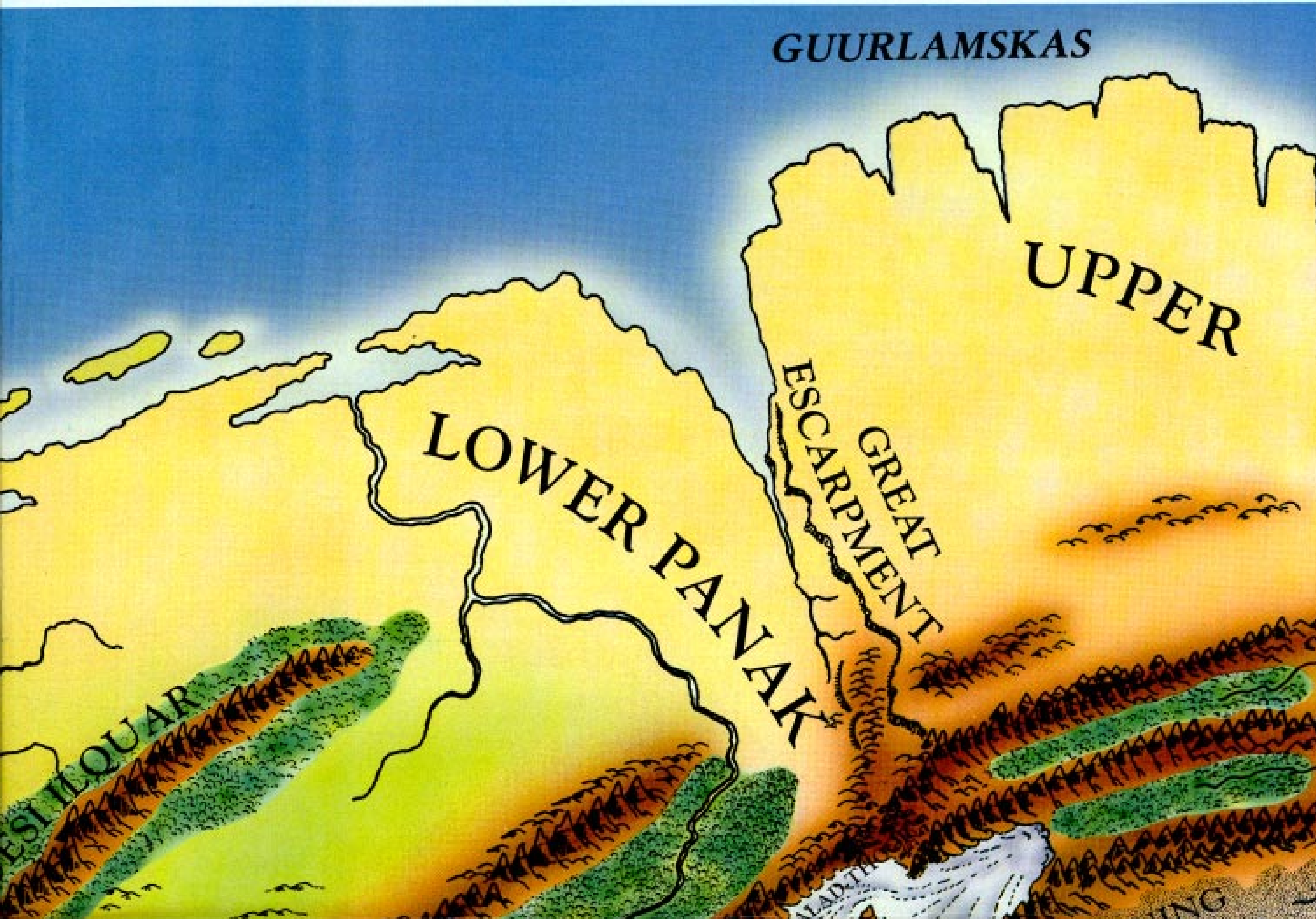
The Contin


Western Ocean
Luminari
Milgath
Rudil
Barask
Morgad
Kristophan
Thera
Eragala
Faroen
Ur'musk Valley
TAMIRE
BURYAHOUAR



THE LEAGUE OF THE MINOTAUR
New Styrllia
Trilloman
Okami
Faroen
Highvale
Vinlans
The Conquered Lands
Armach-nesti
New Sylvanost
Bok
Bay of
NEW
Low Tide Line
Under Sea Volcano
Kristophan
City, Fortress
Mountains
Faroen
Town
Hills
Luminari


Village
Barren
Tower, Keep
Columns
Staab
Castle
Volcanic Glass
Ruin
Swamp, Moors
Road
Jungle
Trail
Forest
Kingdom Border
Grassland
Province Border
Steppes
Molten Lava
Tundra
Cooling Lava
Glacier
Volcano
Scale: One inch equals 40 miles
40
80
120
160
200
240
280
320
RMACH
of Armach (Hoor)
Banks of Hoor
1050XXX0701


GUURLAMSKAS
UPPER
LOWER PANAK
GREAT ESCARPMENT
ESI ILQUAR


Tiderun Gap
Malfon
Turgan Oasis
RING MOUNTAINS
SHINING LANDS

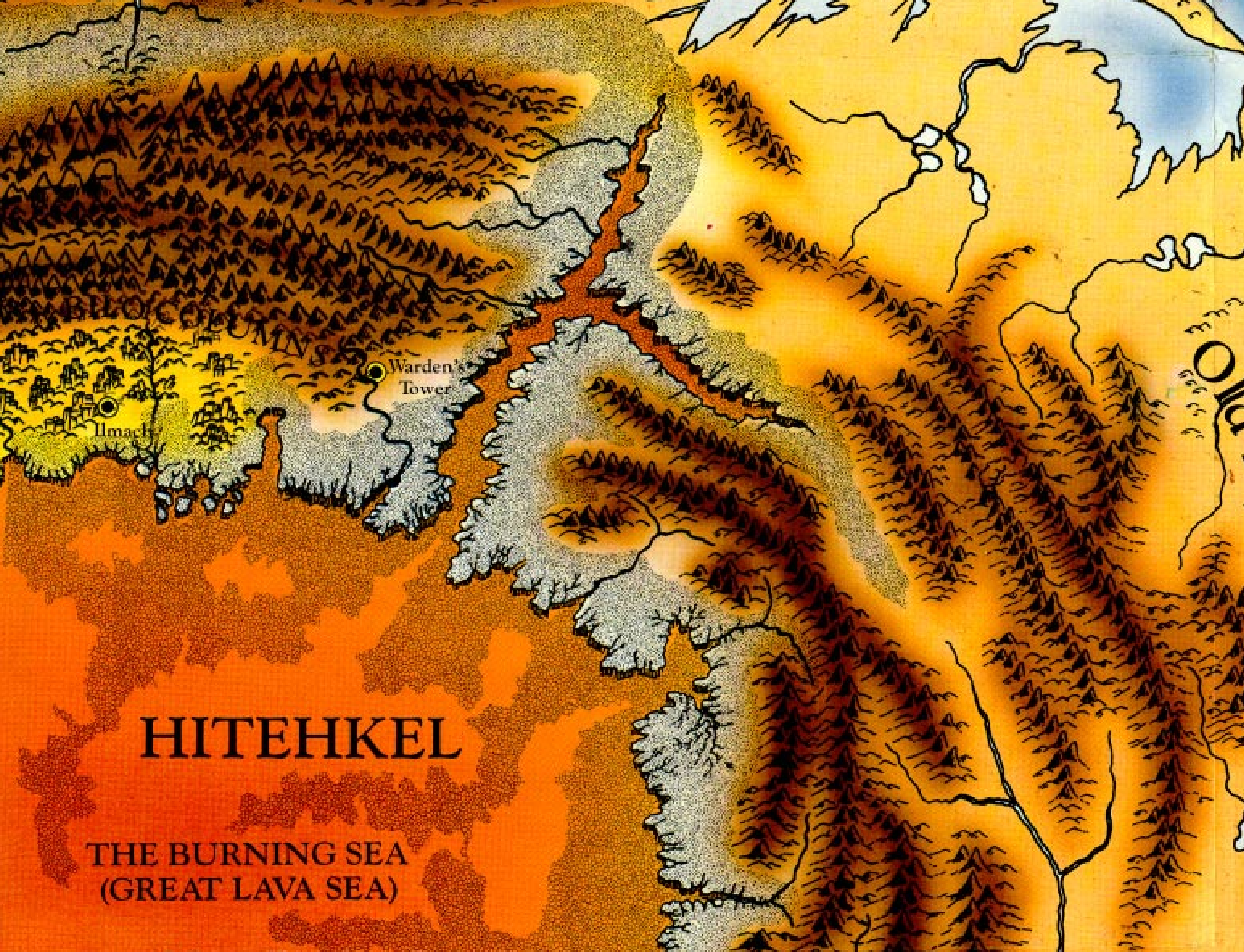


SOUTHERN
MOUNTAINS
INDANALIS SEA

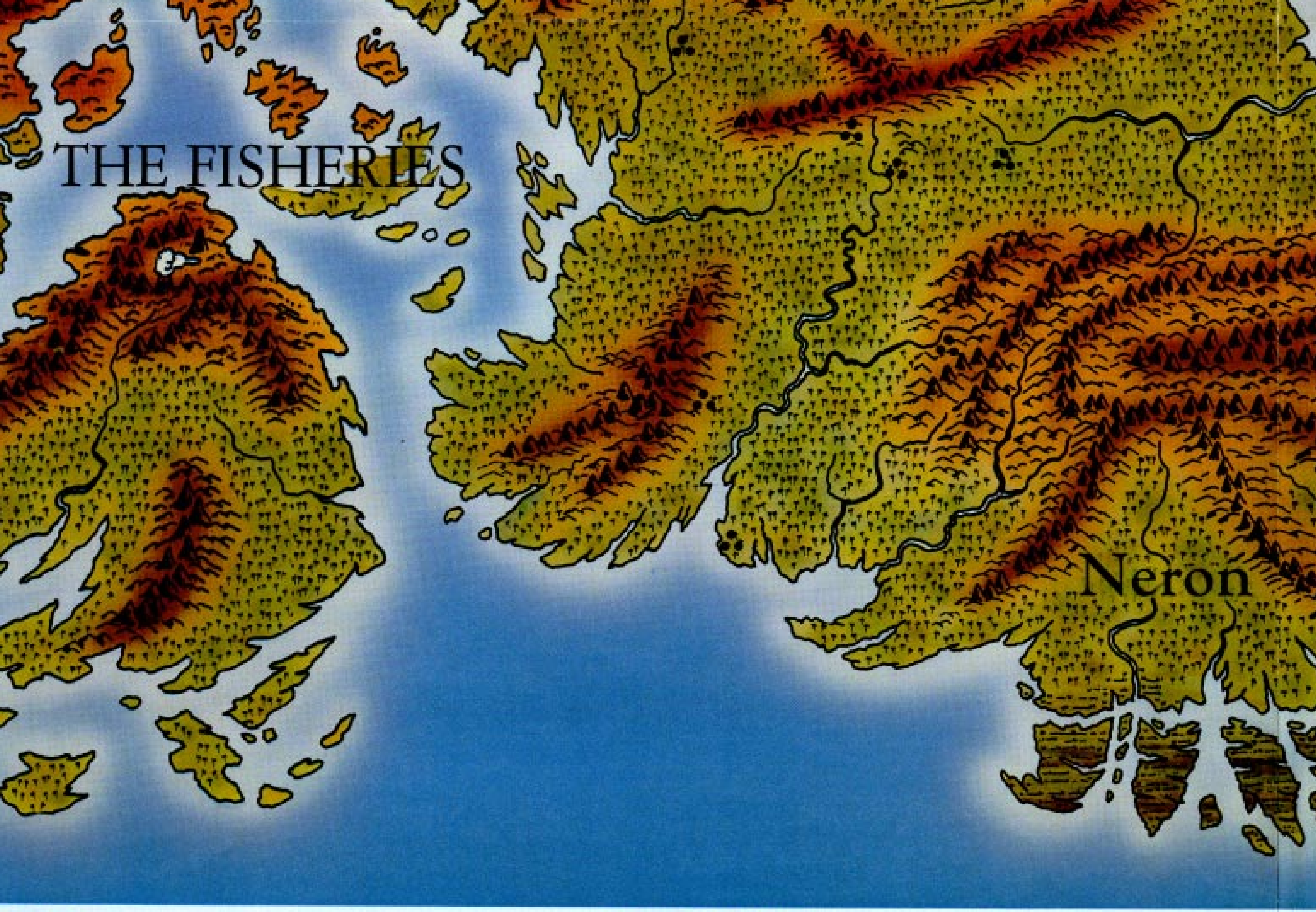

HOSK
THENOL
New Aurim
Trillium River
Hawkbluff
BLACKWATER GLADE
SYLDAR
WINDLESS OCEAN

The Continent of




HITEHKEL
THE BURNING SEA
(GREAT LAVA SEA)
Warden's Tower
Ilmach


Tower of Flame
THE COOLING LAND
THUNDERBREACH
STRAIT


THE FISHERIES
Neron


of Taladas
Scale: One inch equals 40 miles
40
80
120
160
200
240
280
320
RAINWARD ISLES



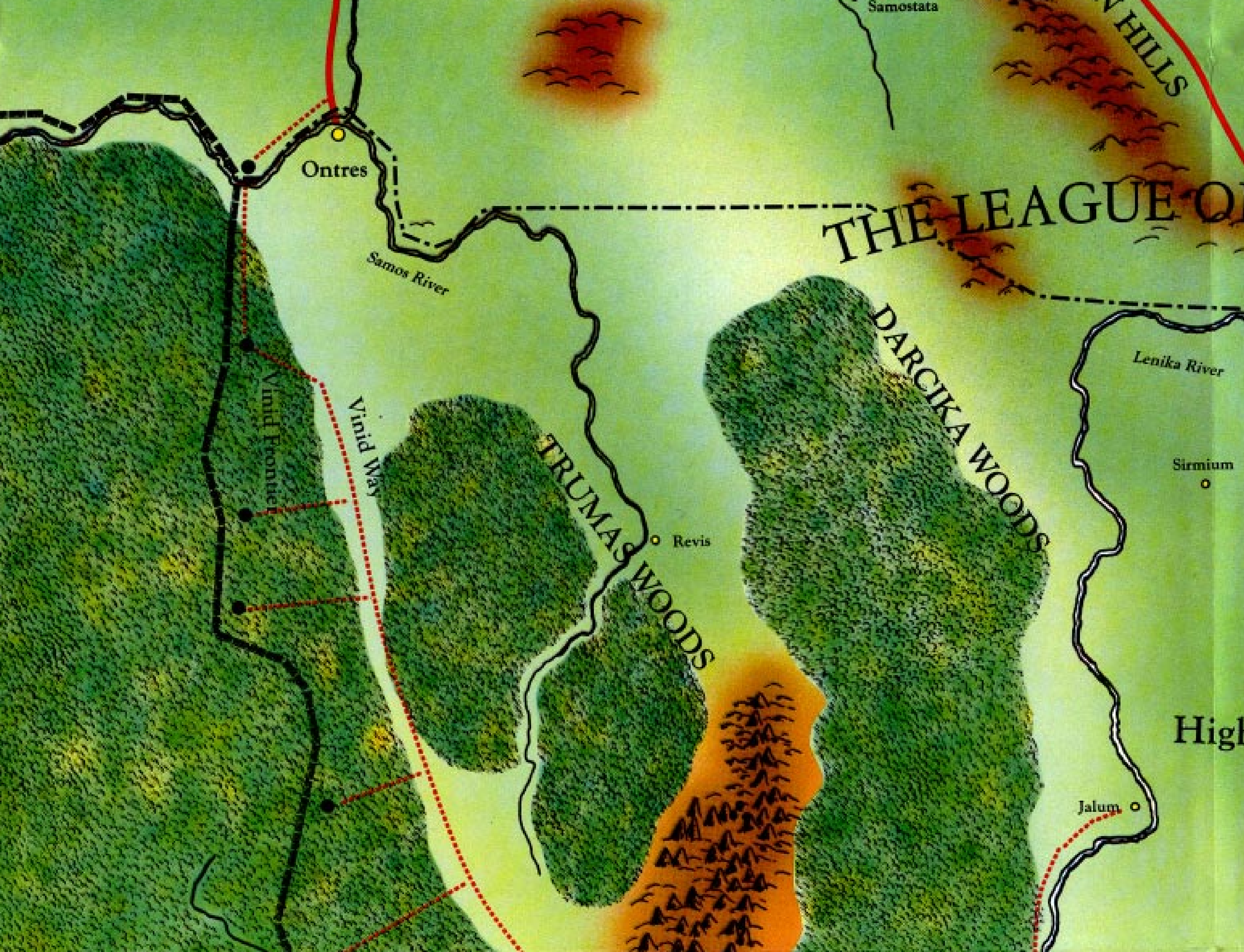
THE BLACK FORESTS
Old Aurim
The Storm Sea
RESTS


THE BLACK FORES


Baltch



WESTERN OCEAN
KARPATHOS BAY
Milvian
The Great Way
Kristophan
Lycan River
Sardica
Methe
River Struma
Letus River
Kossova
Themes
NICODIE FOREST
Luchet
Chald River
Bizona
Conium
Meitene
Pelep
Pergamum
Kert River
Magnaura
THEOS HILLS
Naissus
Samostata


Samostata
HILLS
Ontres
THE LEAGUE O
Samos River
DARCIKA WOODS
Lenika River
Vinid Frontier
Vinid Way
TRUMAS WOODS
Sirmium
Revis
High
Jalum

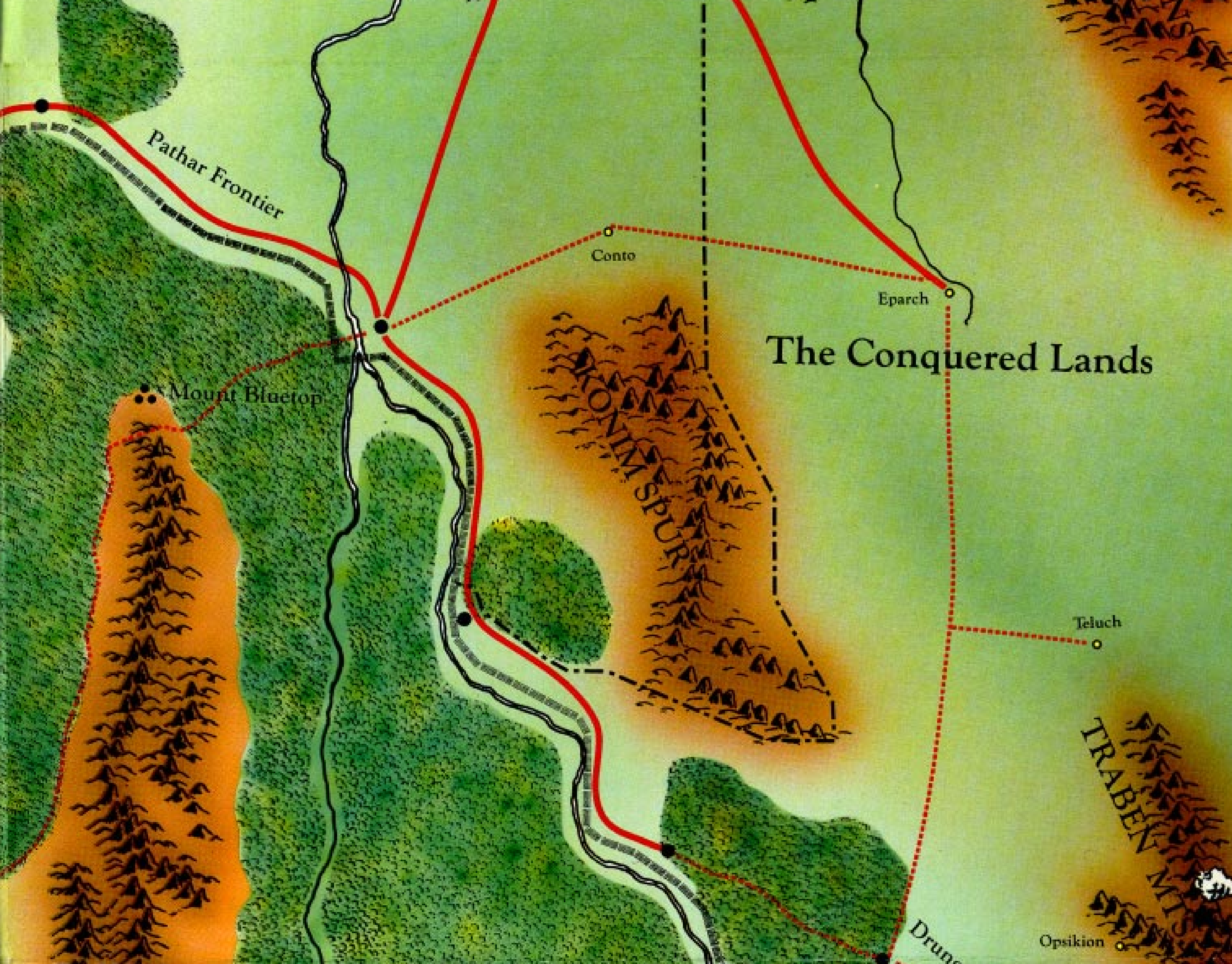


Liepins
High Pass
High Pass Keep
Jala
HIGH VALE RANGE
Couillard
Sakel
VOLKER MTS.
Obas
Poetter
Mittle
ARMACH
Sampica
Klimek

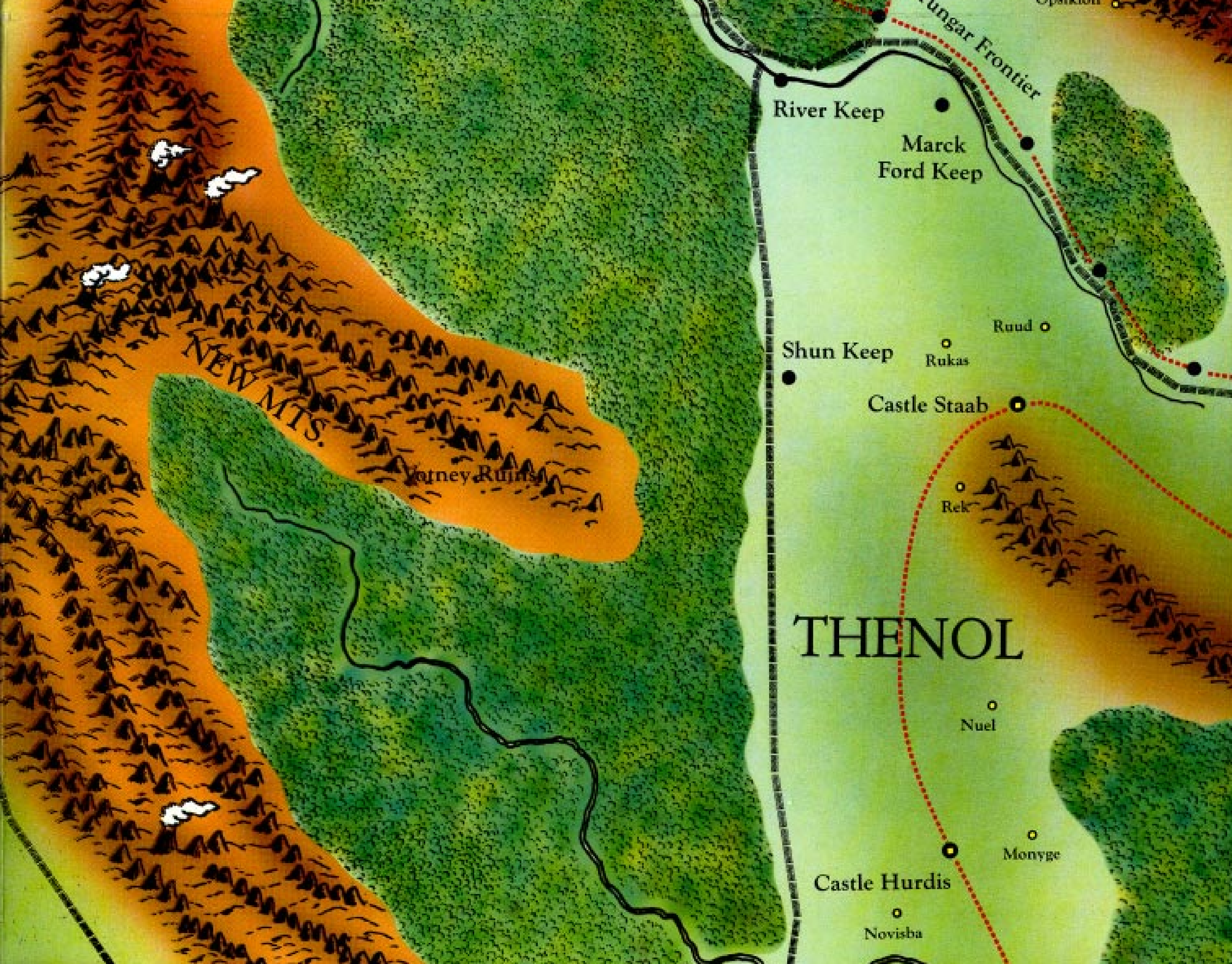

Armach-Nesti
New Sylvanost
Lauf
Bula
Denia
Lens
Steimel
BAY OF ARMACH (HOOR)
Ilvar
Fenberg
Pinzl
Bok
WESTERN OCEAN
Mongin
Noblitt
1050XXX0703


The League of the Minotaurs
Scale: One inch equals 10 miles
10
20
30
40
50
FOREST
THERAN HILLS
Varna
Ohrid
Okami
River Sava
Panar
Trilloman
Sovar
The Great Way
Pelep
Rumati
Cleon
Mixen
Lucys
Koniaz
Xipus River
Burgos
Naura
New Styrllia

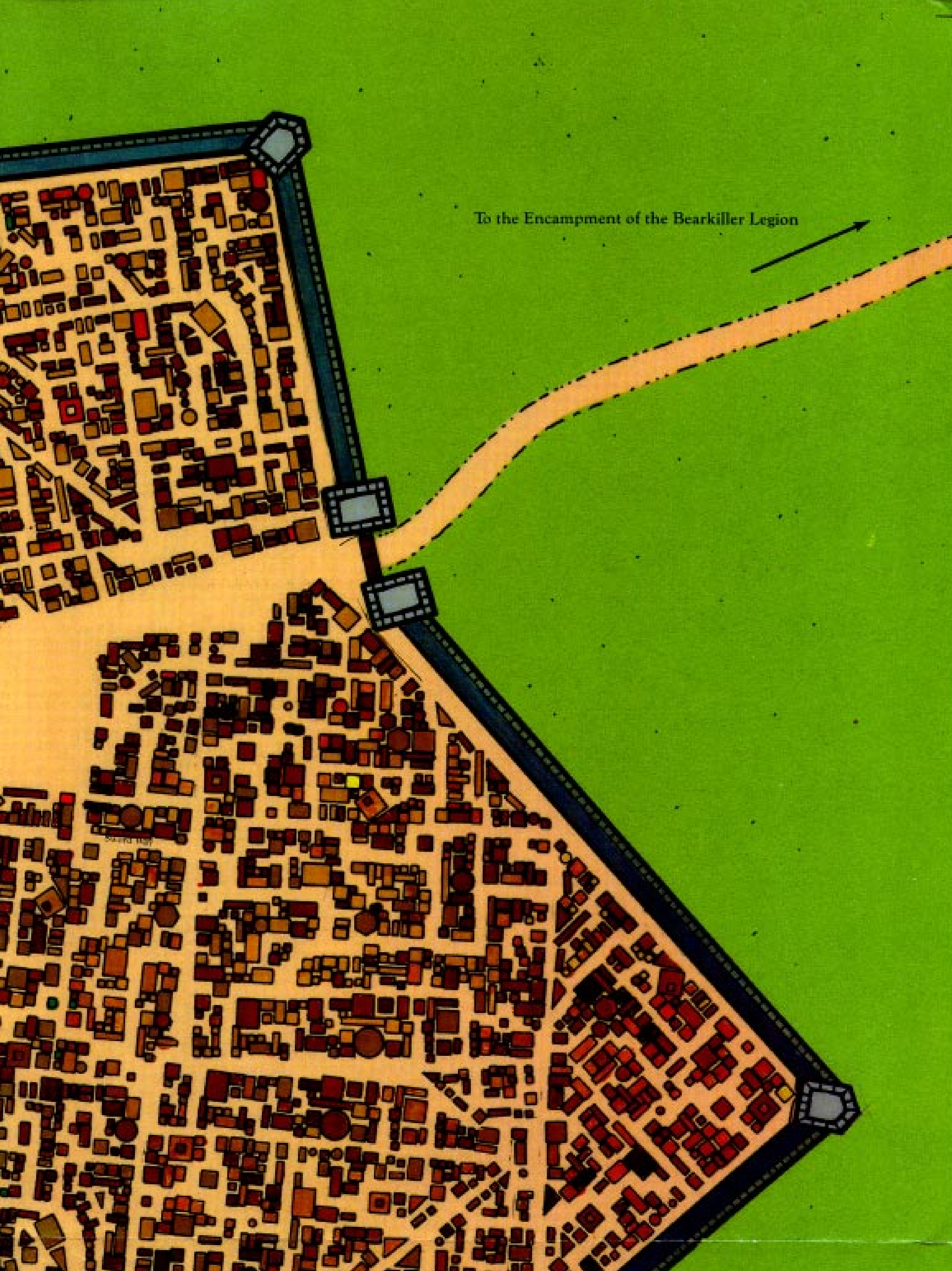

OF THE MINOTAURS
Limvian
Prand
Taron
Thallas
Vezel
Sitron River
Pathon
Vaspurkan
Lycus
Vinlan
gh Vale
Pege
Lenika River
SIKON MOUNTAINS



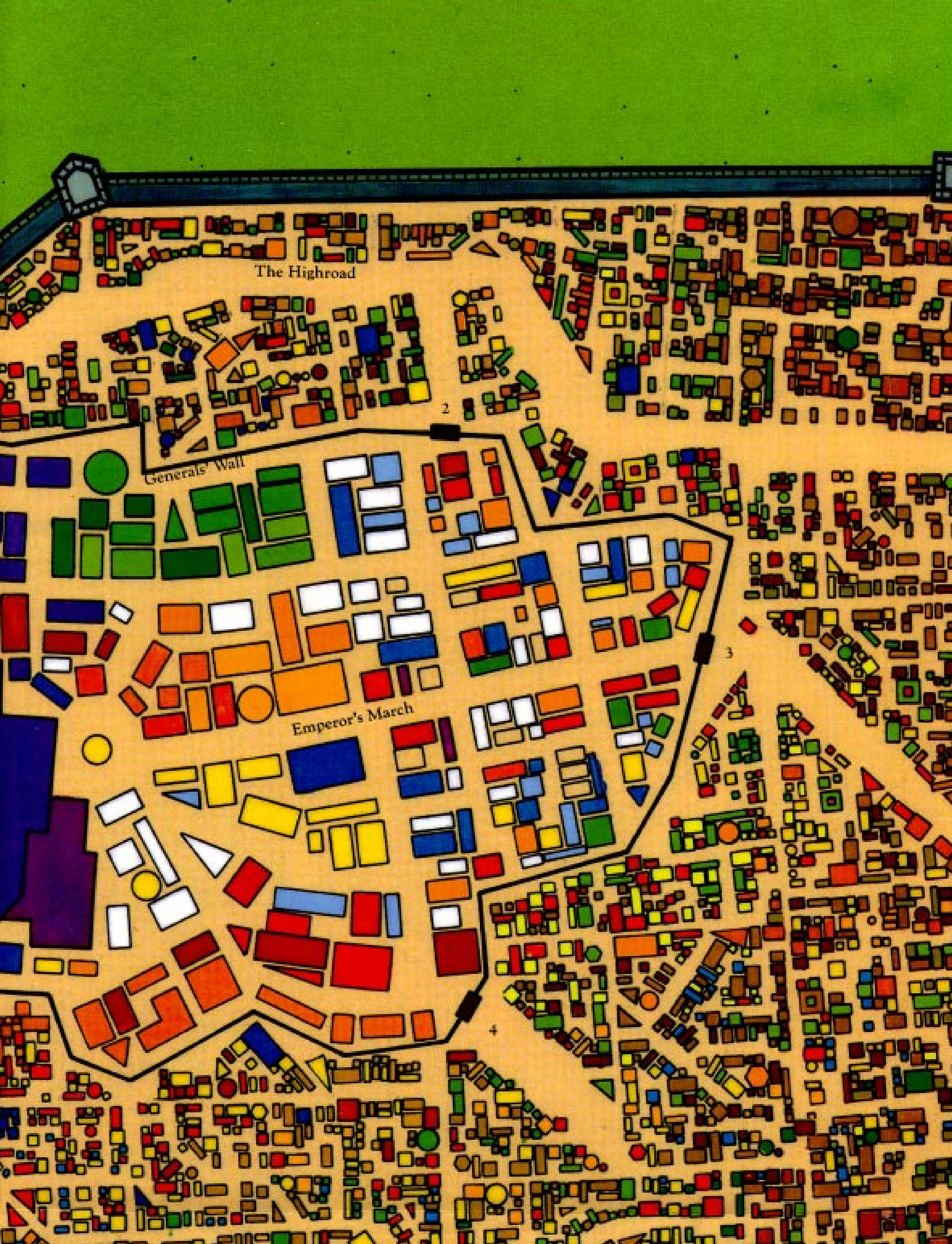
Pathar Frontier
Mount Bluetop
Conto
Eparch
The Conquered Lands
AKONIM SPUR
Teluch
TRABEN MTS
Opsikion



River Keep
Marck
Ford Keep
Frontier
Shun Keep
Rukas
Ruud
Castle Staab
Rek
NEW MTS.
Ruins
THENOL
Nuel
Monyge
Castle Hurdis
Novisba

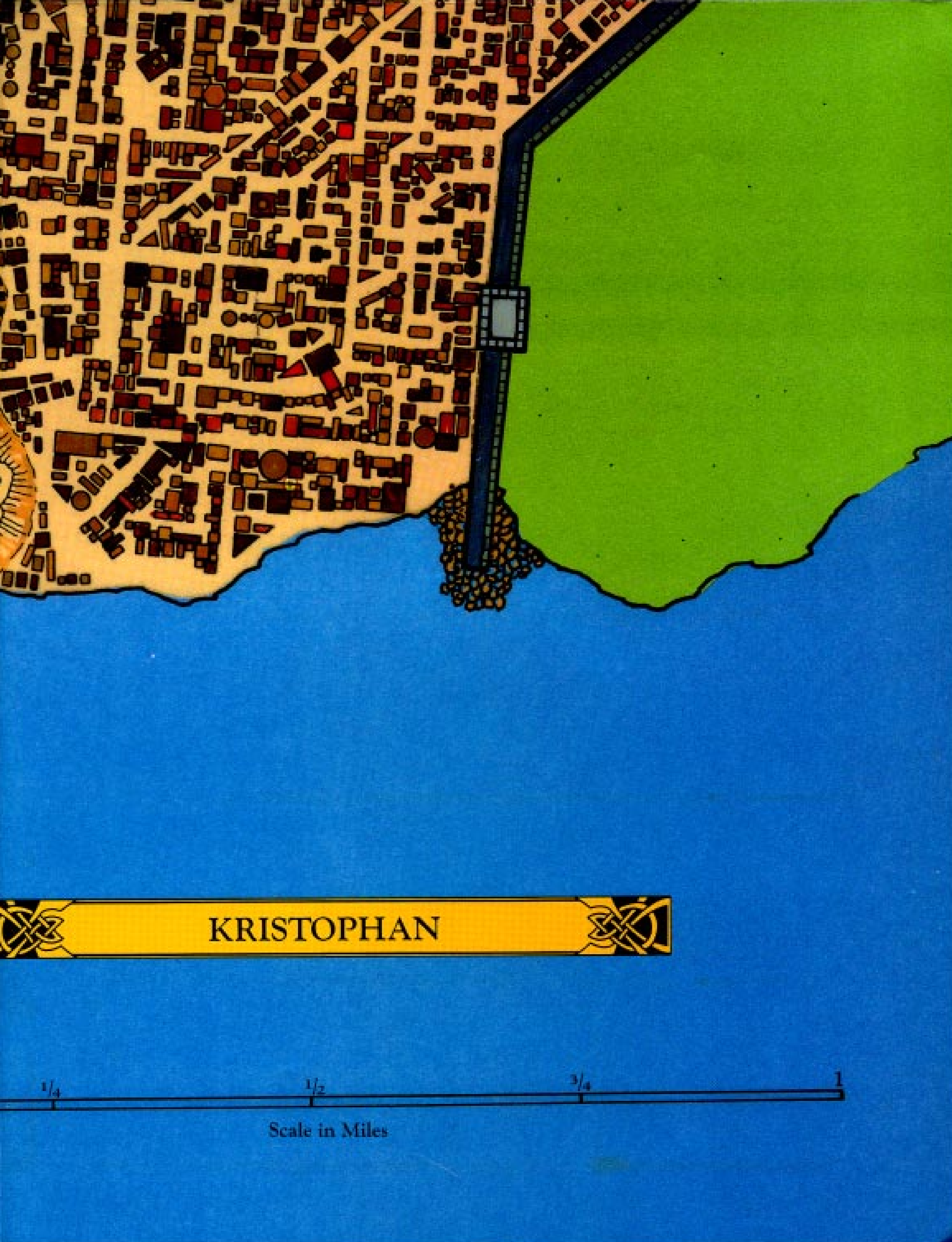

To the Encampment of the Bearkiller Legion


The Highroad
6
7
Emperor's March
Breakwater
8



The Highroad
2
Generals' Wall
3
Emperor's March
4


To the Necropolis
The Great Way
1


KRISTOPHAN
1/4
1/2
3/4
1
Scale in Miles


8
9
9
10
9
9
N
0
1/4
Sullivan '89


Breakwater
5
5
5
5



1050XXX0704

TSR™

$18.00 U.S.

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons® 2nd Edition

DRAGONLANCE®

Official Game Adventure

TIME OF THE DRAGON

When the true gods punished Istar by wreaking the Cataclysm on Krynn, a shower of meteors pounded the continent of Ansalon. Halfway around the world, a similar continent was shattered by a single, enormous meteor. Thousands of square miles of land disappeared beneath a smoking sea of magma which boiled up from beneath the planet's crust. Mountain ranges were toppled, rivers changed course, weather patterns were altered. Survivors were scattered and isolated. The devastation was nearly complete.



Centuries later, the cultures and societies which rise out of the ruins are uniquely shaped by this savage environment. The minotaurs with their eloquent diplomats, elite legions, and gladiatorial contests, are spreading their influence throughout the hemisphere. Wild elves fight territorial wars with humans, kender, and gnomes. Fearsome fire minions rampage around the coasts of the lava ocean while the Followers of Hith seek to dominate the land.

Time of the Dragons includes two information-packed books totaling 160 pages, four poster-size, full-color maps, and 24 individual color plates showing maps, NPCs, and major races.

Designed by David "Zeb" Cook

ISBN 0-88038-773-4

46363 01050

TSR Inc.
POB 756
Lake Geneva,
WI 53147 USA

TSR Ltd.
120 Church End,
Cherry Hinton
Cambridge CB1 3LB
United Kingdom

Printed in the U.S.A.